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Actual screens from  
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# UNREAL PERFORMANCE

**T**here was certainly more than one title available when PlayStation launched, but in 1995, it was Namco's *Ridge Racer* that dramatically showed off the system's graphics capabilities. Now, Namco is poised to repeat history: ready in time for the U.S. launch of Dreamcast, *Soul Colibur* is the most graphically impressive home game ever. But *Soul Colibur* won't be the only impressive-looking title for the system: the complete Dreamcast launch lineup is revealed on page 25.

But will *Soul Colibur* and the rest be enough? While PlayStation 2 is still more than a year away, Dreamcast faces stiff competition from current-generation consoles and PCs — this year's E3 was the best yet in terms of software quality. Our complete show report starts on page 30.

But can software continue to improve at the same blistering pace as hardware? Not according to the experts we spoke to. Attempting to take advantage of next-generation systems like PlayStation 2 with current levels of staff and resources, they say, amounts to creative suicide.

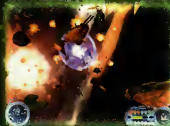
But there is another way. Read about it on page 70.

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GENERATION



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10

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From the sublime to the ridiculous, our crack staff has ferreted out the best, the brightest, and in a few cases, the just plain weird — it's the future, people, get used to it



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# COMMAND & CONQUER



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The one show **the entire industry** gears up for came and went —  
**so who won, who lost, and who got stuck for cab fare?**

# INTELLIGENCE

Game industry news and analysis

## E3 '99: BACK IN HOLLYWOOD

It was strangely quiet, but this year's E3  
was also the best show in years



E3 was once again back in L.A., which no doubt helps account for the larger-than-usual number of barely-dressed booth babes



**A**fter a two-year stint in the muggy climes of Atlanta, the Electronic Entertainment Expo returned to the mammoth convention center in Los Angeles. While the show is usually characterized by brash slogans and ultra-loud volume, E3 '99 was marked instead by an oddly subdued tone (for which there was good reason) but also by the overall quality of product on display, and by distinct signs that the game industry is maturing into a truly mass-market entertainment medium.

To begin with, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration decided to enforce its guidelines regarding acceptable decibel levels, which explains the falloff from the ear-splitting din of previous shows — all to the good, actually. Also, with the show timed as it was in the wake of the Colorado school shootings, no one was anxious to

play up the gore factor, either. Indeed, many of the more violent titles were pulled off the show floor entirely, shown behind closed doors or in curtailed-off areas.

Still, it's a testament to just how good the games themselves were that even a general reluctance to be seen having fun couldn't stop many, if not most, titles from shining. True, there were no Zeldas or other truly groundbreaking gameplay designs, but the industry is expected to pull in some \$7.5 billion this year (a greater sum than domestic box-office receipts) and established genres showed a level of refinement unparalleled in their history.

Nintendo got things off to an early start, leaking news of its new Dolphin system to *The New York*



Sega's booth showed off Dreamcast, while Sony tried to intimidate them with giant, inflatable game characters

**In fact, everywhere you looked, there were monitors displaying the finest graphics yet seen at an industry show**

Times and holding an evening press conference in Japan. This meant everyone knew about it beforehand, so Nintendo's press conference was packed. Rumor has it Sony had fully intended to show nothing of PlayStation 2, preferring instead to concentrate on its PlayStation lineup, but news of Dolphin ensured there was a PlayStation 2 station on the floor, running demos.

And, despite having some of its thunder stolen by its rivals, Sega and Dreamcast were everywhere, making a much-needed, very strong showing. The beauty of *Soul Calibur*, the freneticism of *Power Stone*, and

the realism of Sega's own sports titles, *NFL 2000* and *NBA 2000*, showed off both the power and the promise of the system.

In fact, everywhere you looked, there were monitors displaying the finest graphics yet seen at an industry show and — if you could actually get your hands on a controller — the most refined gameplay. The industry's explosive growth has meant increasingly serving a mass market, and ease of entry and the intuitiveness of control has risen accordingly.

E3 '99 made one thing above all else clear: the industry has arrived.

## BEST BOOTH OF SHOW: SIERRA

Despite a shaky past and a buyout by Havas, Sierra came out swinging and boasted the best overall lineup of the show.

Although recent years have been rough for Sierra, you'd never know that judging by its booth, which was home to more standout games than any other. The expected titles were on view: *Homeworld* continues to amaze, *Tribs 2* is set to outdo the original trendsetter, and *Team Fortress 2* mesmerized the crowd despite only being present as a non-interactive demo.

But other, lesser-known games had their own kick. *SMAT 3* is determined to steal the strategy/action/multiplayer crown from *Rainbow 6*, showing an attention to detail and environmental realism as yet unseen (for instance, a brick wall will stop a bullet, but *Shootrock* offers no protection), and a more accessible menu-driven method of controlling a squad. The quirky title *Orcs* breaks squarely into *Dungeon Keeper* territory, putting the player in charge of training and maintaining an army of, well, orcs in Tolkien's Middle Earth.

Plus, *Diablo II* (set in the Sierra booth because parent company Havas also owns Blizzard) was perhaps the most addictive title in the convention center. All in all, if you missed Sierra's booth, you missed out on some of the best games you'll see in the coming year. Well done.



## BEST OF SHOW

**Miss the show this year?** Talk about these games and they'll never know you weren't there

**A**lthough there were many solid titles at E3 this year — maybe more than in any past year — as usual, a few stood out from the pack. Following are short descriptions of the games, and a couple of

booths, that had people talking, watching, and lining up to play. None are finished yet, and bad things could happen to any before they're released, but here, in no specific order, are the games of the show.

### PlayStation 2 Demos

**Publisher:** Sony

**Developers:** Various

Showing the *Gran Turismo* demo on the floor was a stroke of brilliance — keeping Sony's booth packed and offering a tantalizing glimpse of the fantastic games PlayStation 2 will offer when released.



### Soul Calibur

**Platform:** Dreamcast

**Publisher:** Namco

**Developer:** Namco

Although only time will tell if this has the depth of a *Virtua Fighter*, Namco's brawler easily snags the title of the best-looking console game ever. Don't believe us? Check out our mammoth preview on page 26.



### Tony Hawk's Pro Skater

**Platform:** PlayStation

**Publisher:** Activision

**Developer:** Neversoft

Simply put, this is well on its way to being the best skateboarding game ever made. Smooth control, real skaters, and famous boarding locations plus one flashy set of moves make this a skate rat's dream.



### NFL 2000

**Platform:** Dreamcast

**Publisher:** Sega

**Developer:** Visual Concepts

Sega's investments in this Visual Concepts title (see **NG 54**) are paying off: the game looks fantastic and plays well, if a little slower than *Game Day*. With four months left before it ships, we expect great things from this game: its interface and hyper-realistic replays make it a serious contender for best sports game of all time.



### Dino Crisis

**Platform:** PlayStation

**Publisher:** Capcom

**Developer:** Capcom

As the cover story for our last issue, we knew going into E3 that *Dino Crisis* would rock the show. Playable to the industry for the first time, this *Resident Evil*-style game replaces the lurching undead with prowling dinosaurs. Featuring a realtime 3D world, *Dino Crisis* surpasses even *Resident Evil: Nemesis*, as the latest in the seminal survival-horror series maintains prerendered backgrounds.



## SURPRISE OF SHOW: INTERPLAY

Let's not mince words: no one expected much from Interplay this year. Despite the success of Baldur's Gate, the company had too many delayed titles and was in deep financial trouble.

Yet E3 '99 saw the company belted out by Trus, and its booth promoted more than a few double takes. Many had all but written off Messiah, Shari's flagship game, as having been pushed back too many times, opinion being that its much-vaunted variable geometry technology, which raises or lowers the number of polygons on the fly in response to available processor speed, was veering on the edge of obsolescence. And yet, with almost all the game's elements in place — rendering engine, AI, effects, level design — it's an absolute stunner, differing most of all what Dave Perry promised back in **NO. 33**.

Messiah wasn't the only notable title. Planet Moon's Giants keeps looking better and better, and Planescape: Torment could steal Baldur's Gate's crown at the top of the RPG heap. Little-seen Evolve was, perhaps, the prettiest game at the show, offering a number of interesting gameplay wrinkles as well.

Interplay may have been down, but it proved it's far from out.



## BEST OF SHOW CONTINUED

### Ultima: Ascension

**Platform:** PC  
**Publisher:** Origin  
**Developer:** Origin

Yeah, it's been a long time coming, but Richard Garriott's magnum opus is clearly worth the wait. A highly detailed world, gripping story, simple controls, and one of the best camera algorithms ever devised make this title worthy of a place in game history.



### Ready 2 Rumble

**Platform:** Dreamcast  
**Publisher:** Midway  
**Developer:** Midway

Midway's killer arcade-sports tradition continues with this Blitz-meets-boxing brawler. Funny and fast-paced, with great control and speed, this game will sell systems for Sega.



### Crash Team Racing

**Format:** PlayStation  
**Publisher:** SCEA  
**Developer:** Naughty Dog

This homage to Mario Kart clearly shows its influences, but the addition of jumps, excellent speed, and incredibly tight control, as well as the incorporation of all the best elements from the Crash universe, make it a winner.



### Drakan

**Format:** PC  
**Publisher:** Psygnosis  
**Developer:** Surreal Software

The meat and potatoes of Drakan's impressive fantasy world and action/adventure gameplay was seen at last year's E3. This year, developer Surreal Software has poured on the gravy with fantastic lighting and special effects, new weaponry (including a bow with a sniper mode), and polished gameplay.



## WORST OF SHOW

Along with the great games, there were a few that, spectacularly failed to meet our expectations. While it's important to note that all of these titles are unfinished, and could (we hope) turn out great, the following is our list of the most disappointing games we saw at the show.

### DAIKATANA

Imagine a choppy, old Quake ifacial conversion. That's this, as far as we could tell. The weird AI and puzzles? At one point we shot a robot and more robots came, and at another, we had to turn a crank to drain some water. Score.

### D2

Maybe we're not sophisticated enough to appreciate it, but a game that is designed so your character has bad aim does not strike us as fun. Also, lead developer Lorne's face showed more emotion on the 32X version than on this.

### SHENMUUE DEMOS

We think Shenmue could be brilliant, but you can't tell that from the awful-numbering, cross-your-own-adventure gameplay in the demos, which were chosen for the show based on ease of translation, not quality of gameplay. A critical error in an otherwise fine performance by Sega.

### RED DOG

We hope Argonaut's Dreamcast debut was simply ahead too early — this slow-moving, line-art vehicle-combat game would barely pass muster on PlayStation, never mind a next-generation system.

### THE PLAYSTATION

After five years, PlayStation simply no longer has what it takes. While a few games showed flashes of inspiration, the aging hardware consoles that most will be releases of games we've seen too many times before. And as senior programmers move on to next-generation systems, leaving PlayStation work for the B teams, things will only get worse.



HE'S BACK AND  
HE'S NOT ALONE...

GOD BLESS THE RING  
**EHRGEIZ**

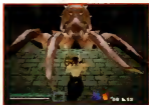
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RANDOMLY GENERATED DUNGEONS



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## CONSPICUOUSLY MISSING

### Flagan Bros.

Format: Dreamcast Publisher: Sega  
Developer: Visual Concepts  
One of the earliest U.S.-developed, non-sports titles for Dreamcast (aside from the cancelled shooter *Geist*)  
Flagan is a classic platformer with highly-stylized cartoon art (think Henne-Barbena in 3D). Featuring two brothers—one big and strong, one small and fast—the odd-paired duo must work together to solve puzzles. Nowhere to be seen.

### Conker's Quest

Format: N64 Publisher: Nintendo  
Developer: Rare  
First shown two EOs ago, *Conker's Quest* confound many onlookers who found it very similar to another new N64 game from Rare—*Bayo-Kazeo*. We believe the title character of this game, a wily squirrel, has holes raised up in Nintendo's treasure for reasons unknown.

### Medal of Honor

Format: PlayStation Publisher: EA  
Developer: DreamWorks Interactive  
Despite apologetic suggestions to the contrary, rumors say EA didn't show *DreamWorks World War II* expo-first person shooter for PlayStation simply because they didn't want to fall victim themselves to the violence-hounding TV crew.

### PlayStation 2 Games

They may have been there in spirit, as undeniably back-of-booth business between Sony and third-party publishers and developers was the first of many steps on the long road to the realization of what may be some fantastic PS2 games. Also, nothing tangible was shown aside from the playable next-generation PlayStation demo of *Gran Turismo* and "the rubber duck demo" that were first shown in Japan when Sony announced its plans for the new system.

### Duke Nukem Forever

Format: PC Publisher: GT Interactive  
Developer: 3D Realms  
The long-time coming PC sequel to *Duke Nukem 3D* was nowhere to be seen. According to GT, developer 3D Realms opted not to put together a demo for the show, remaining focused on getting the game out. Last year, the developer switched its technology from the Quake II engine to the Unreal engine, and as the project has faced considerable delays, some believe the title is only slightly less troubled than *DukeNuke*. Again, the media frenzy around violence might have contributed to keeping the fat-top hero and his arsenal of one-liners safely back at the studio in Dallas, Texas.

## BOOTH REPORTS

From the show floor to your living room

**A**lthough a rundown of every game shown at E3 is impossible, here's an at-a-glance guide to the best titles shown in major publishers' booths.

**SONY** With its typical multi-tiered stand (complete with a restaurant on the third level), Sony assaulted the floor with a slew of first- and third-party product. Popular sequels such as *Gran Turismo 2*, *Tomba 2*, *Urn Jammer Lammy*, and *Spyro 2* as well as new franchises *Crash Team Racing*, *Omega Boost*, *Granda*, and *Ape Escape* dominated the booth. While many of these titles took PlayStation to new visual heights, the reality is that PlayStation 1 technology is old and tired—despite the sold games, there wasn't much excitement; at no point did we have to wait in line to play big games. Unsurprisingly, the biggest draw was the pyramid-shaped PlayStation 2 demo station that ran a loop of tech demos and a playable *Gran Turismo PlayStation 2* demo.

While the company has strong products to get it through next year, we can't wait till Sony sheds its PlayStation 1 shackles and moves on to something truly cutting-edge.

**SEGA** Despite Sega's claims to the contrary, quantity not quality was watchword at Sega's booth. Triple-A titles like *Ready 2 Rumble* and *Sega Sports NFL 2000* were mixed in with questionable releases like *Pen Pen Trilceon* and *RedWing Racer* (reviewed page 39). The sheer number of titles, however, buoyed hopes for a successful U.S. Dreamcast launch. (For a complete list of the 40+ titles on the floor, see page 25.) Still, Sega's first-party titles were excellent. *NFL 2000* and *NBA 2000* both looked incredible, as did the Ecco the Dolphin tech demo.

Surprisingly strong were the third-party titles. *Soul Calibur* was the strongest title (better than most first-party efforts), and *Ready 2 Rumble*, *Power Stone*, and *Bilz 2000* drew crowds as well. Unfortunately, for every strong title, there was a loser: *D2*, *Pen Pen*, and *Red Dog* were all either way too early or way too bad to be in the same booth as *Soul Calibur*, and rushing them out the door may blunt Sega's launch impact. Sega also announced that a 56k modem would be packed in with the system and that an online service would be offered. Overall, the Sega booth was the place to be at E3 if you were looking for console games—and at some points it seemed everyone at the show was there, pushing carts for games like *NFL 2000* upward of 30 minutes.

**NINTENDO** Nintendo surprised anyone who thought it would sit on the sidelines this year with its Dolphin announcement (page 16). With Nintendo and Miyamoto concentrating on Dolphin launch software, the Nintendo 64 torch has been passed to Rare, which had *Dorothy Kong 64*, *Jet Force Gemini*, and *Perfect Dark* playable on the floor (Conker's *Quest* was nowhere to be found). A strong third-party showing (see sidebar, opposite page) should keep Nintendo 64 strong this holiday season.

Nintendo also shined with Game Boy Color and Pokémon. The company cites TRST reports showing it is selling nearly 100,000 Game Boys a week—meaning, Nintendo was quick to point out during its press conference, that it should sell more Game Boys this month than Sega will Dreamcasts this year.

**UBI SOFT** Ubi's highlights included the Dreamcast port of *Speed Devils*, the beautiful 3D platformer *Rayman 2* (N64 and Dreamcast), and submarine shooter *Deep Fighter* (PC and Dreamcast). N64 kayak racer *Wildwaters* also looked good. The company also announced multi-title deals for the *Batman* license and Disney's Donald Duck.

**LUCASARTS** While *Racer* and the imaginatively titled *Phantom Menace* have been covered to death, Lucas impressed showgoers with the Hal Barwood-designed *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine*, which captures both the adventure and humor of an Indy movie, and *Obi-Wan*, an Episode I update to the Jedi Knight franchise.

**NAMCO** Although Namco was showing Game Boy Color *Pac Man, R4, Ace Combat II*, and a revamped *Pac World 3D* platformer for PlayStation, the real performer at the booth was the phenomenal Dreamcast fighter *Soul Calibur*, our cover story this issue (page 26).

**ACCLAIM** It was more South

3D0 Army Men Air Attack



Crave Blades of Valiance



EA Hurst



Infernum Alone in the Dark 4









## DOLPHIN ARRIVES

Nintendo shocks showgoers with announcement of new partners, new business model



**N**intendo's relationship with the ex-SGI hardware gurus at ArtX has been known for some time, but at a pre-E3 briefing, Nintendo revealed further plans for its next-generation system, including the project's code name: Dolphin.

### The Technology

As expected, ArtX will be providing the custom graphics hardware, but two new partners were announced: IBM, which will provide the custom, PowerPC-based CPU code-named Gekko, and consumer-electronics giant Matsushita, which will provide the DVD drive system and custom DVD-ROM manufacturing processes, which NDA Chairman Howard Lincoln

called "counterfeit-proof."

Although Nintendo refused to release anything beyond the most basic details — Dolphin will contain a 400MHz CPU and a 200MHz graphic subsystem with embedded DRAM — Lincoln was quick to claim that the system would "equal or exceed anything our friends at Sony will produce with PlayStation 2." No demos were shown at the announcement; to back up the statement (and they were allegedly shown behind closed doors to only a select few), development is already underway. In an exclusive interview, Lincoln confirmed to **Next Generation** that development is underway "at Rave, Retro Studios, Nintendo, and at least two other studios that I'd rather not name right now."

Like the Sony-developed Emotion Engine, which will drive PlayStation 2 (and unlike Intel's Pentium), the PowerPC chip excels at the floating-point calculations essential for 3D graphics, and the enhancements to Gekko are expected to include even more powerful floating-point abilities. Unlike Sony and its partner Toshiba, however, IBM has experience at building .18 micron process chips, and it already has a fabrication plant up and running. The chip will also be built with IBM's patented copper process technology, which requires less power and is less expensive to build than traditional chips, which use aluminum connectors to connect the individual transistors in the chip.

The involvement of Matsushita,

the custom operating system, and the PowerPC-based processor have led some ways to suggest that the system may be based at some level on the PowerPC-based, 3DO-developed M2 technology, which was sold to Matsushita for \$100 million in 1995.

"Whatever it takes" approach toward market leadership.

More importantly, Matsushita will be cross-licensing Dolphin technology to include in its own DVD players. Starting in fall 2000, Panasonic will offer DVD players that can play Nintendo Dolphin games, as well as movies and music. This will offer Nintendo and its partners a powerful inroad into traditional consumer-electronics channels.

Whether the technology is based on M2 or not, Nintendo certainly seems to be inspired by the same dream that led Trip Hawkins to initiate its development: the creation of a killer set-top box that will serve as a standard for far longer than the five-year lifespan of

### DOLPHIN SYSTEM SUMMARY

#### CPU

IBM Gekko Processor  
(a superset of the PowerPC chip architecture)  
400MHz clock speed  
.18 micron copper process technology

#### Memory

3.2 Gb/sec memory bandwidth

#### Graphics Processor

Custom ArtX chip design  
200MHz clock speed  
.18 micron process technology  
Embedded DRAM

#### Medium

Matsushita-developed proprietary DVD technology featuring enhanced counterfeit protection

### LINCOLN TO RETIRE

Just before E3, **Next Generation**

**Defies** broke the story of Nintendo of America Chairman Howard Lincoln's retirement. Lincoln, who has been with NDA since just after its founding, and who has been instrumental in forging the company's success, will remain with Nintendo until February 2000. Lincoln will remain on board of Nintendo, Rave, and the Seattle Mariners. "I have friends who want me to go fishing with them, and I want to go fishing with them!" Lincoln said to **Next Generation** at E3. "I love Nintendo, and I love working with Mr. Yamaguchi and Mr. Arakawa, but doing this job just takes 100% of your waking hours, and it's time for me to go." Although a Nintendo spokesperson says Lincoln will not be replaced, **Games Business** magazine reports that a search for a successor is underway.

### The Business Model

What's most revolutionary about Nintendo's announcement, however, isn't the technology but Nintendo's drastic change in its business model. Nintendo has jettisoned its legendary intransigence about controlling all aspects of software manufacturing — the attitude that led to Nintendo scuttling the original PlayStation Super NES add-on deal out of fear that Sony would make more on licensing than Nintendo would and sticking with expensive, inferior carts for Nintendo 64 (which Nintendo made a tidy manufacturing profit on, even if third parties lost money). Instead, Matsushita will be manufacturing the DVD software for Nintendo's Dolphin. Why Nintendo made this decision isn't known, but it portends a new groves-off

a traditional game console.

While the 3DO multiplayer certainly wasn't that box (nor was the PlayStation, despite Sony's "PlayStation Forever" slogan at 1997's E3), a machine the quality of PlayStation 2 or Nintendo's Dolphin certainly may be. Sony's reaction to the Panasonic move will almost certainly be to include PlayStation 2 technology in its DVD players (or to scuttle DVD players entirely in favor of PlayStation 2 boxes). If that happens, the year 2000 may see the console war to end all console wars.

**Note:** We'll have more information on Nintendo's Dolphin, as well as more excerpts from our exclusive talk with Howard Lincoln, next issue. **IGN**



# ARCADIA

by Marcus Webb, editor of *AmPlay* magazine

## WIN AMERICA'S FIRST DREAMCAST

The Sega GameWorks arcade chain is beefing up its prize counters and retail offerings with some extremely tasty offerings. You can already win CD players, real Harley Davidson motorcycles, and even a House of the Dead arcade game. Next, they're also planning to stock the prize counter with DreamWorks movie paraphernalia, T-shirts featuring Sega videogame characters, and, just possibly, early editions of the Dreamcast! Partnering with Babbages, GameWorks is also adding GameStop, a new retail store concept, within the GameWorks locations. The first one opened April 1 at the GameWorks in Grapevine, Texas. At GameStop, customers can buy the latest PC and console games, plus action figures and strategy guides.

## GAMEWORKS GROWS UP

The Sega GameWorks chain of LBE (location based entertainment) sites has wisely taken a page from their arch competitor, Dave & Buster's, by adding bigger and better bars and restaurants to their locations to beef up their appeal to adult players. It's working: GameWorks CEO Michael Montgomery says up to 40% of revenue now comes from food and drink as their adult customer base grows. The latest GameWorks stores in Detroit, Miami, and suburban Chicago sport the new design, which will be retrofitted to several older GameWorks sites soon. "If you survive your grownup guests, they will tell you you've got to have a bar in the middle," Montgomery admits. "That's how they get comfortable." GameWorks has also backed off its original super-ambitious projections of building 100 arcades worldwide by 2002, a scheme which would have required opening a new \$10 million facility every six weeks. They're now taking it more on a case by case basis, evaluating each opportunity as it comes and keeping the new (lower) target number to themselves. By the way, GameWorks co-founder Steven Spielberg and Design VP John Snoddy are still huddling on new ideas for additional super-video attractions along the lines of their "Vertical Reality" game.

## SATELLITE DOWNLOADING TO SEGA ARCADES?

Sega plans to add satellite downloading to the capability of its Naomi arcade hardware platform (Naomi is the arcade sister to Dreamcast). Hisashi Suzuki, representative director and executive vice president of Sega Enterprises, revealed the R&D push in a recent British arcade magazine. "We intend to make it possible to download games via satellite connection," Suzuki was quoted as saying in a copyrighted story in *InterGame*. "This is not as far out as it may sound to many [arcade owners]." Suzuki didn't give a starting date, but he did say downloading is the next logical step for Naomi system. By the way, Sega is now starting to test Naomi's "nationwide Instant score comparison over the Internet" phase in GameWorks arcades here in the U.S.

Suzuki also claimed Sega has written orders for an incredible 200,000 Naomi systems, and that the factory plans to sell another 300,000 in its second year on the market. Can these numbers be real? A reported 15 Japanese videogame factories have licensed Naomi boards, but Sega won't say exactly who they are. At any rate, it's still we say "far from typical" to order video hardware platforms in lots of 20,000 before you've even released your very first game on a new system. So far, only Capcom has produced an arcade video with the Naomi platform under license (Power Stone).

## SEGA'S "AIRLINE PILOTS"

Besides linking up games via modem for remote, real-time competition and downloading new games via satellite, Sega's got — believe it or not — even more ambitious plans for its Naomi platform. Just a taste of what they have in mind is seen in their new arcade game *Airline Pilots*, a deluxe, triple-monitor, sit-down unit. The complex and realistic simulation, starting from takeoff through a flight over Tokyo and a final landing, runs on three linked Naomi boards. If you crash, there's no wreckage shown, just the word "crash" on screen. The interest this has generated all but ensures that Sega's got more multi-board Naomi games coming.

## TAKING A QUANTUM LEAP INTO COIN-OP

Midway Games is using a customized variation of "Quicksilver II" Quantum 3D PC-based videogame platform for *Hydro Thunder*. This is an ironic development, since Midway has said loudly that PC-based technology is fundamentally unsuitable for arcade applications. Midway engineers are quick to point out that they're not making use of the so-called "ArcadePC open architecture" specs promoted by Intell and its allies. Nonetheless, Midway is now aboard the PC movement, at least for some games. As many industry observers have always said, the arcade industry does not face a stark either-or choice between PC-based games or proprietary arcade platforms; there is room for both to co-exist peacefully. Midway's quiet decision to move into the ranks of PC technology users solidly confirms this prediction.

As for Quantum 3D, this Fremont, Calif. supplier is producing and shipping over 100 units of "Quicksilver II" each day and gearing up for even greater production capacity. The board features an Intel BX motherboard and Celeron, Pentium-II, or Pentium-III based processors. Different graphics accelerators based on 3Dfx products can be used with it. Besides Midway, these systems are being ordered by Laser-Iron, Opus Entertainment UK, and others.

## TEKKEN ARCADE TOURNAMENT

Some arcades began a "tag tournament" mode for their Tekken arcade games in June. Characters from *Tekken 2* and 3 are united for the first time in the tourney, which also features 20 additional "time release" characters as you go back for subsequent play over a period of weeks. Each player forms his own tag team with two characters, but you can change your team at any time with the touch of a button. This makes for some interesting combo moves when you swap characters during an opponent's midair leap Check in at [www.talktennournament.com](http://www.talktennournament.com) for time release info, character artwork, moves, and "cool stuff"

## THE FRENCH INVASION

It's hard not to notice the trend: Earlier this year, Centice Software was sold to Havas SA, a division of giant French media company Vivendi. And just before E3, thus, a small French publisher, took control of a majority interest in Interplay, and Infogrames bought Acclaim.

Many are wondering what has triggered this sudden powerful presence of French companies in the American market. We caught up with Bruno Bonnel, president and director general of Infogrames, at E3 and asked why his and other French companies have made such a sudden impact.

"The French stock market has been extremely active with interactive entertainment companies," he explained, "because French investors believe France has a shot to be powerful in this market."

Bonnel recalls the pre-war presence of French film studios in the international cinema. However, the second World War cut that short and gave way for complete dominance on Hollywood's part. Now France hopes to achieve its former worldwide entertainment-industry glory, but in games instead of film.

While Internet stocks have not been exploding in France, interactive-entertainment stocks have. Just as stockholders of American game publishers are demanding quarter-to-quarter profits, promoting the publishers to move away from a "release everything in the fourth quarter" schedule, stockholders in French companies are demanding the companies expand into the global market.

"There is a great optimism that France can play an important part of the games industry if we are global," Bonnel concluded.

## HARDCORE

One day my older brother Sean got an NES with Mike Tyson's *Punch Out* and Baseball Stars as a present, and I was hooked instantly. At the time, doctors said my motor skills were bad and they would never be at the level of a normal person's. So I might have trouble performing basic tasks like throwing a baseball back and forth. However, playing the NES shot my hand-eye coordination through the roof and saved me from living a dysfunctional life. I'm one of the few people who can honestly say that they have been told by their doctors to "play more video games."

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# BIG IN RUSSIA

Serge Amirdjanov reports from the Eastern Front



**T**he gaming scene in Russia is like nowhere else. It's a complex mix of old and new, cutting-edge technologies and years-old gaming myths. It is a world where 8- and 16-bit systems once were strong but then faded away upon the appearance of mighty PCs. The Russian gaming industry isn't very old, having appeared only in the early '90s, and the most thrilling pages of its history were written in the past few years. In 1994, there were only three or four game developers, but the growing popularity of gaming in the country has raised this number to

at least 25 to 30 today.

The console market in Russia is dominated by PlayStation, which has an installed base of just under one million. Sony officials insist that this number is lower, however, because they only count legally sold PAL systems, not imported U.S. and Japanese consoles outfitted with mod chips, which have been imported in large quantities since the system's launch. PlayStation officially came to Russia in 1996, but Sony's media campaign started a year later. In 1999, Sony won't see any sign of slowdown and may even double its presence at market with a huge marketing blitz worth several million dollars. Nintendo isn't doing so well, however. Nintendo 64 isn't even officially released in Russia, and most systems (there are only several thousand in Russia) are imported from the U.S. Most players have no alternatives other than PlayStation or PC.

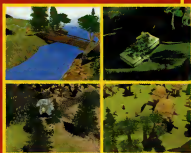
Hit games in Russia usually sell around 20,000 to 40,000 units. Unfortunately, we are not talking about legal, colorfully-packaged boxes — most sales come from piracy, which is rampant in the market. As for official releases made by big publishers and distributors, the successes are smaller. The largest distributor is Softclub, which has contracts with all the major U.S. and European publishers like Electronic Arts, Activision, and GT Interactive. Several overseas hits Softclub released, like *Wing Commander: Prophecy*, *Populous: in the Beginning*, and *SimCity*

## Allods (Rage of Mages) 3D

**Developer:** Nival Interactive **Release date:** Q4 1999

[www.nival.com](http://www.nival.com)

Probably the best-known Russian game title after *Jedris*, *Rage of Mages* has received positive reaction from press and gamers alike after its release last fall. Nival Interactive was working on two projects after *Rage of Mages'* release. The first, to be released by Monolith shortly, is the direct sequel to *RoM*, titled *Macromancer*, but the second is much more interesting. The new game in the series, under the codename *Allods 3D* (the series is published under *Allods'* trademark in Russia), will be a completely 3D RPG/strategy experience with hugely detailed polygonal worlds, built on an enormously powerful engine capable of drawing approximately 25,000-40,000 polygons per frame. This results in an almost Dreamcast-like graphical look of the game world with hills, rivers, trees, characters, and buildings all rendered on the fly with sharp detail. The original morphing technology allows designers to create all kinds of characters, and no two will look alike. The gameplay consists of accomplishing numerous quests while developing the characters and digging into the storyline. The combat is similar to *Bakur's Gate* (you can use *pixels* to issue orders to your team) but is now implemented into complete 3D. *Allods 3D* is definitely set to storm the strategy world, not only as a technological masterpiece, but also as an incredible gameplay experience.



Monolith has already proved that this series has what it takes to succeed in the U.S., so a 3D update seems like a sure thing.



3000 have proved successful despite piracy, but there's still a lot to do in that area.

While publishers lose money because of piracy, the gaming magazines make plenty of money keeping gamers informed of all the news. There are at least ten game publications in Russia now, and their popularity is incredible. My magazine, *GameLand*, is not only the leading games-related magazine in the country, but its circulation is actually larger than any other computer magazine nationwide. It's a bit like Russia's *Famitsu*, a biweekly publication covering all popular formats, including PC, PlayStation, N64, and Dreamcast, with a monthly circulation close to 100,000 copies. There's also an *Official PlayStation Russia* magazine, which is, by the way, with exception of France, the only *Official PS* magazine in Europe not published by Future Publishing, the U.K.'s tech-magazine powerhouse. On the PC side, there is *GameWorld Navigator* and an extraordinary Game.exe magazine known for its bizarre style of writing.

Among the dozens of different development teams, several are working on really special titles (see boxouts). Many American and Japanese are working with Russian graphics studios on making animation

## Iron Strategy

**Developer:** Nikita  
**Progress:** Q3 1999  
[www.nikita.ru](http://www.nikita.ru)

Although there are lots of 3D strategy titles liberating the market at the moment, nothing can be compared with this Russian look at the genre. Nikita is one of the most experienced and acclaimed Russian development companies, and this project is its attempt to bring realism, visual beauty, and excitement together into one booming package. You will find both action and strategy here and will be able to build your custom robots and command armies of technomonsters. The camera can show you the action both from inside and outside the cockpit and will zoom up to a thousand feet from the ground. Magnificent landscapes and multilayered skies make you believe you're actually there. And a battle on a night of a thousand stars under the lights of alien moons make the experience just unbelievable. Although the game isn't complete with missions yet, the designers promise to include at least 20 unique missions in the final version, as well as full multiplayer support. Think of *Iron Strategy* as *MechWarrior* and *Battlezone* combined and you will be close to imagining the finished product.

**The cockpit view provides several heads-up green-screen displays. No word yet on whether or not an accelerator is required.**



for their games. The most recent examples are Animatek's cut scenes for *Final Fantasy Tactics* (including that gorgeous-looking intro), and selected scenes from the upcoming Square masterpiece *Final Fantasy VIII*. The canned *WarCraft Adventures* also featured animation provided by a secret St. Petersburg studio, which was recently bought by

## While publishers lose money because of piracy, gaming magazines make plenty of money keeping gamers informed of the latest news

Havas Interactive.

The game industry in Russia is not without problems — piracy especially — but with only a few years of history behind it, it is growing rapidly. More people play, and more home PCs are sold for gaming use every day.

ENB



**Exhaustively researched, Warlock Vseslav features an intriguing blend of action, strategy, and role-playing. Expect a bidding war among U.S. publishers**

## Warlock Vseslav: Sword of Fire

**Developer:** Snowball Interactive **Release date:** Q3 1999

[www.snowball.ru](http://www.snowball.ru)

This project, one of the most anticipated by Russian gamers, is already two years in development. The huge amount of time was put into deep research of Russia's ancient history. The world of the game is created from a mysterious fantasy universe and some actual historic 11<sup>th</sup> century material, and it's based on a concept of ancient artifacts left by strange Titan creatures, which can give immortality to their owner. *Warlock* is the story of human relationships, of epic battles, and the value of man's life. The game is unique in the aspect that it doesn't follow any genre in a linear fashion. It's a bit each of adventure, RPG, and strategy. *Dabbesque* fighting sequences meet complex storytelling and strategic planning of battles with hordes of enemies. The game shines with personality; the RPG system is simple yet really effective, the graphics are detailed with huge 3D landscapes, and a smart lighting system allows developers to create anything from dark and scary nights to sentimental sunset scenes. Snowball Interactive plans to release a demo of this game soon containing the first episode of Vseslav the Warlock's adventure and will hopefully announce its U.S. publisher soon after E3.



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# DREAMCAST COUNTDOWN

An impressive array of titles showcases new system

## Dreamcast at E3

**S**ega had over 40 games displayed on the show floor at E3, many of which were being shown for the first time. There are 16 titles scheduled for launch right now, with 30 titles promised by the

holiday season. While there is a distinct lack of heavy-hitting titles, this is an extremely strong showing for Sega's fledgling console, and the future looks bright.

### THE END OF DREAMCAST

Not quite, but it is the end of the Dreamcast section. This isn't at all an indication of any decrease in the level of our coverage of Dreamcast — it's quite the opposite, in fact.

Our coverage of Dreamcast is now so intense that it can no longer be contained in a single 14-page section.

Starting next month, look for Dreamcast previews in the Alphas section, and reviews in the Finals section. We think you'll be pleased with the increased level of coverage, and it's only the first of a series of changes we are planning leading up to our five-year anniversary issue.

Let us know what you think at

[opndline@imaginemedia.com](mailto:opndline@imaginemedia.com).

### THE LAUNCH TITLES

*Sonic*  
*VF3: TB*  
*Sega Sports NFL*  
*Sega NBA*  
*House Of The Dead 2*  
*CART Racing*  
*Air Force Delta*  
*Armada*  
*Hydro Thunder*  
*Monaco Grand Prix*  
*Mortal Kombat Gold*  
*NFL Blitz 2000*  
*Power Stone*  
*Ready 2 Rumble*  
*Soul Callbur*  
*Aerowings (formerly Aero Dancing)*

### PUBLISHER

Sega  
Sega  
Sega  
Sega  
Sega  
Sega  
Konami  
Metropolis Digital  
Midway  
Ubi Soft  
Midway  
Midway  
Capcom  
Midway  
Namco  
Crave

### OTHER GAMES SHOWN

*Alone In The Dark 4* (Infogrames), *BioHazard: Code Veronica* (Capcom), *Blades Of Vengeance* (Crave), *Blue Stinger* (Activision), *Carrier* (Jaleco), *Castlevania Resurrection* (Konami), *Climax Landers* (Sega of Japan), *Cool Boarders* (Sega), *D2* (Warpi), *Dynamite Cop 2* (Sega of Japan), *Expendable* (Rage), *F1* (Ubi Soft), *Frame Gride* (From Software), *Gundam* (Bandai), *Maken X* (Ageatec), *Marvel Superheroes vs. Capcom* (Capcom), *Metropolis* (Sega of Europe), *Outcast* (Infogrames), *Pen Pen* (Sega of Japan), *Psychic Force 2012* (Taito), *Quarterback Club* (Acclaim), *Red Dog* (Sega of Europe), *Redline Racer* (Ubi Soft), *Sega Bass Fishing* (Sega of Japan), *Shenmue* (Sega of Japan), *Slave Zero* (Accolade), *Speed Devils* (Ubi Soft), *Tokyo Xtreme Racing* (Crave), *Undercover* (Sega of Japan), *Test Drive 6* (Accolade), *Toy Commander* (Sega of Europe), *TrickStyle* (Acclaim), *Vigliante 8: Second Offense* (Activision), *Xtremion* (Kalisto)

## First on the Floor

Several titles made their debut on the E3 show floor, and here are the first screen shots anywhere

BLADES OF VENGEANCE



CASTLEVANIA RESURRECTION



NFL BLITZ 2000



TEST DRIVE 6



VIGILANTE 8: SECOND OFFENSE



Has the **promise of power** tempted PlayStation loyalist Namco to **defect to Dreamcast?**

## Soul Calibur

**FORMAT**  
Dreamcast

**PUBLISHER**  
Namco

**DEVELOPER**  
Namco

**RELEASE DATE**  
September

**ORIGIN**  
Japan

**W**hat could motivate Namco — the company that built its current empire on PlayStation franchises like Ridge Racer and Tekken — to port its next big arcade title to Dreamcast, the system created by its oldest rival? To Namco, it makes perfect sense. "Soul Calibur was created on System 12 [an enhanced PlayStation arcade board]," explains Teruaki Konishi, Soul Calibur's producer at Namco's Tokyo HQ, "and it contained such a huge amount of data — character models, motion data, data control files, etc. — that Dreamcast is the only existing console that we could port the game to as-is." He



The overtly lush visuals of Soul Calibur make it the new benchmark by which all other games will be judged. With high-resolution graphics and a rock-solid 60fps, there is nothing else that currently comes close





Combos are still encouraged, but there is now a much larger repertoire of moves to use them with, intensifying gameplay

adds, "And with Dreamcast, we can actually expect improvements over the arcade version."

He's right. The differences between the Dreamcast version of the game and its arcade counterpart are startling. The more powerful Dreamcast hardware has enabled the team to create a fighting experience that visually exceeds even Sega's own *Virtua Fighter 3*. Absolutely huge characters move with lifelike realism as they try to cut each other to ribbons with a wide variety of weapons. The backgrounds are also finely detailed, making this among the most visually impressive titles ever seen in either the home or arcade — even

in its current alpha-release status

"Because we can use larger textures, the characters and backgrounds are much more detailed than the arcade version," Konishi explains. "The processing speed of Dreamcast also enables us to use more fluid motion-captured movement. The ability to show more detailed movement and facial expressions has enabled us to finally produce the level of quality we've always hoped for." Add to all this the game's high-resolution graphics and rock-solid 60fps, and the true elegance of the game's beauty shines through — an artistic masterpiece in a virtual world.

## NBA BASKETBALL

Sega is betting that its basketball game will turn heads at E3 with its large characters and tight gameplay. The game is so detailed that it actually has fully animated coaches, benches, and even a scorer's table on the sidelines. It still remains to be seen how the game plays, but we have high hopes.



History repeating itself? As on PSX, Namco has shown that it is the best developer to showcase system power



This is hands down one of the best-looking sports games we have ever seen. We hope the gameplay can live up to the flashy graphics

## DREAMCAST



gameplay has been further tweaked in the conversion from the arcade version to the Dreamcast build, resulting in superior game balance

## Arcade vs. Dreamcast

Although the arcade release of the game looks great, a head-to-head comparison shows noticeable improvement in the Dreamcast version



The arcade version [left] looks nice, but the Dreamcast version [right] is much sharper and features better transparency effects

Fans of the arcade version of *Soul Calibur* already know that the gameplay has been significantly improved since *Soul Blade* on PlayStation. What may come as a surprise, however, is that the game is being enhanced even further on Dreamcast. "We've tweaked the game balance," confides Konishi, "but we did so without losing the original feeling of the game. We also intend to improve the player controls so that it is easier for a player to use a special attack."

While the game still relies on the same four-button layout (kick, vertical slash, horizontal slash, and block), the gameplay has been subtly enhanced so that players don't have to rely as heavily on pre-programmed auto-combos. Instead, the game is now structured much more like *Tekken 3*, with a wide variety of moves that string together easily. The addition of dozens of new bone-jarring throws also adds much-needed depth, which should quiet some of the complaints directed at the earlier game.

All of this improvement comes at a price: for Konishi and his team of 30, it means an absolutely breakneck 100-hour-work-week development pace to make the projected September release. "We've spent two months just analyzing the hardware itself," says Konishi, "and we've been modifying the characters' model data and background data for the last three."

With only a few months to go, will there be time to add all of the extras that have been a staple of Namco's recent home-console releases? "We will



Every hit is marked by a small explosion and a lighting effect. This time around, they are far more spectacular than ever



Dreamcast can hold more motion-capture data than the arcade version can, resulting in smoother animation

add some new modes to the Dreamcast version," promises Konishi, but he's reluctant to leak any details about what they might be, or even how the game will support the VMU when released. When asked what some of the new surprises might be,



Besides the initially selectable characters, we bet that there are many hidden ones—including missing members from the original cast of *Soul Blade*

one source at Namco hinted at new hidden characters, but further details will have to wait until just prior to release.

Still, there will be plenty of characters to choose from even before you find your first secret one. While many are returning characters from *Soul Blade*, including Teki, Mitsurugi, Xianghu, and Voldo, there are an equal number of new faces as well. Among the new additions, the most impressive is a hulking giant named Astaroth who wields a massive battle ax. Complementing him is an equally impressive knight named Nightmare (pun probably intended), outfitted with a massive broadsword and jet-black armor. On the other end of the spectrum are Kilik and Ivy, two smaller, faster characters who deal less damage but make up for it in maneuverability. Kilik uses a staff, while Ivy is armed with a unique sword that can break into a segmented whip. All told, there are 10 initially selectable characters for players to choose among.

*Soul Calibur* is an impressive Dreamcast debut. What else can we expect from Namco in the near future, on Dreamcast and other platforms like PlayStation 2? While he declined to offer specific details, Konishi has some very definite plans. "Our goal is to make games that can reflect the player's spirit and emotion," says Konishi. "Whatever the hardware may be, we always remember that the main purpose of any game is to have fun. With that in mind, we will continue to develop new gameplay ideas and extreme graphics." If *Soul Calibur* is any indication, Namco is clearly on the right track.

## STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3

The best *Street Fighter* yet gets a better-than-perfect conversion with all animation intact, no load times, and plenty of extra features to keep everybody happy. If done right, this will be the pinnacle of 2D fighters in the home.



Each and every fighter from the SF II and Alpha series is represented in this final installment of the Alpha trilogy

With *Metropolis*, Sega has secured its **most impressive racer yet** and a true competitor to the *Gran Turismo* throne

## Metropolis Street Racer

**FORMAT**  
Dreamcast

**PUBLISHER**  
Sega

**DEVELOPER**  
Bizarre Creations

**RELEASE DATE**  
Fall 1999

**ORIGIN**  
Liverpool, U.K.

**A**fter the phenomenal success of *Psygnosis'* Formula 1 series in Europe, it's no surprise that its developer, Bizarre Creations, was tapped as one of the first developers on Dreamcast. *Metropolis*

*Street Racer* will be a launch title for Dreamcast in Europe on September 27, and it's highly likely that there will be a near-simultaneous U.S. release.

*Metropolis SR* will be set in three locales. San



The one-and-a-half square-mile areas for each of the three cities featured in the game required over 30 hours of videotape and 32,000 photographs of the real-world locations to ensure the polygonal re-creation was perfect

## An Audience with Martyn Chudley

After taking *Metropolis* out for a pre-release spin (trying to drive past various Next Gen haunts in San Francisco, like The Dubliner or CornerBar™), Next Generation sat down with Bizarre Creations' president and founder, Martyn Chudley, to talk about working with Sega, Formula One, and the difficulty of crashing licensed cars.

**Next Generation:** How did your collaboration with Sega come about, especially after years of you working exclusively on PlayStation? Was it your initiative or Sega's?

**Martyn Chudley:** It was Sega's — after they saw *F1* at E3 in 1996. They eventually found out

who we were, and we talked about working on the Saturn. We felt it was too late for us to start on that,

but kept in touch, and we really started working together when Dreamcast first came on the scene.



When Martyn isn't hanging with his team (left) he's out doing some more research for *Metropolis* (right)





While the game is still not quite photorealistic, all of the textures for the game environs (left) were conceived from photographs of the real-world locations they were based on (right)

San Francisco, Tokyo, and London. "The three cities were chosen for a number of reasons," Bizarre's founder and president, Martyn Chudley, explains. "They are key cities in the world, and interesting to look at. All three are also well known in the gaming community, housing many developers, arcades, etc. And as a minor point, they're all cities Sega has major offices in to help us with the research!"

Gamers will race more than 20 licensed convertible cars — and some hidden ones — in nine famous districts (three in each city). Each area features approximately two square miles to race in — great for gamers, but serious work for the developers. "We've taken over 32,000 photographs, and more still to come for the final areas being modeled," Chudley says. "There's 30 hours of video footage taken for background research. In total, we've have taken over 70 flights to do research —



Each of the cars in the game is licensed and meticulously modeled after the real thing

back in the days of Black Belt, Bural, and Katana — remember them?

**NG:** After the failure of Sega's past few attempts, (like Sega CD, 32x, and Saturn, how were you convinced that working on Sega's next platform would be worthwhile?

**MC:** For quite a few reasons, one of them being those previous platforms! Sega really have to re-prove themselves with Dreamcast, and so they have been putting a lot of hard work into this. We, along with a lot of other developers, enjoy working with the hardware itself, and the fact that they have already sold a million units of hardware in Japan really speaks for itself.

**NG:** What are your thoughts on Dreamcast and its ability to be a serious contender in the very competitive console market? Will

**"Sega really have to re-prove themselves with Dreamcast, and so they have been putting a lot of hard work into this"**

— Martyn Chudley

Sega succeed this time?

**MC:** It's already a serious contender in Japan, and looking at the pre-orders already mounting up, it's got every chance of succeeding in the Western world as well. One thing about the console market is that it's always had two major players. This is a great state of affairs not only for the developers, but for the consumer as well. There's no room for hardware or software complacency, and each

console will vie for first place, thus producing better and better software.

Also, I believe that Dreamcast

will have the upper hand, at least for now, on its price point. It looks like it will be substantially cheaper than PSX 2, perhaps even half the cost, so the market may even get split by the demographics of the user base — and this may also come across to the type of software produced.

**NG:** Will you "come back" to PlayStation anytime soon, or are you happy with Dreamcast and PC

## READY 2 RUMBLE

Midway's latest sports title is shaping up to be one of the most visually impressive seen on Dreamcast yet. Much like *Blitz* and *NBA Jam*, *R2R* relies on fast action with a dose of humor rather than stark realism. This one should be released with the system in September.



Each character registers pain when hit. Bruises and cuts will appear if you suffer too much punishment

hardware for now?

**MC:** Well, there's nothing to develop on for PSX 2 at the moment! We're a multi-platform

developer, and we'll always look at new technology when it comes along. We think that Dreamcast, PC, and PSX 2 are all exciting platforms for developers, but when and if we do work on PSX 2, we're not going to be dropping Dreamcast for the foreseeable future.

## THE GAME

**NG:** Can we see *Metropolis Street Racer* as an unofficial "sequel" to your *Formula* series?

**EXPENDABLE**

Rage Software demonstrates its abilities for flashy graphics and intense action with this third-person action title. It looks promising so far with lots of weapons and spectacular explosions, but we hope it has more depth than other attempts that have been made in the same genre.



The game looks great, but it remains to be seen whether a third-person shooter can provide long-term fun

and that obviously doesn't include London research." Still, Chudley says if Dreamcast can handle the data — and shots here certainly demonstrate that it can — the team has a responsibility to deliver as detailed a world as it can.

And graphics aren't the only piece Bizarre is looking to innovate: The game will have a full arcade mode with single races, championships, and time trials but will also add an innovative gang battle mode. In gang mode, the aim is to become part of one of MSR's international street-racing gangs and



While the tracks seem to suffer from a distinct lack of civilian traffic, Bizarre promises that there will be enough other details to keep players occupied while racing

**MC:** No, it's a completely new game from *F2! F2!* Is following real life exactly — you have your game

**MC:** There is an American manufacturer — Ford — specifically chosen for the

protection, if needed?

**MC:** Yes, there's different weather — and specifically tuned

like that?

**MC:** As you will find with nearly all licensed cars, there's no damage to the car itself, as this would not show the car in a good light. However, this doesn't stop us having damage occurring to the surroundings...

**"There's no room for hardware or software complacency, and each console will vie for first place"**

— Martyn Chudley

designed for you by the FIA. Metropolis, although the locations are real, gives you a chance to do something that you'd never be able to do in real life — that is, drive around the place in gangs with no holds barred!

**NG:** To what extent will MSR appeal to the American public, given the fact that most of the manufacturers licensed in your game are either European or Japanese?

American market. There are also some other models in there that the American audience should find very familiar... [Laughs.]

**NG:** Might we perhaps see the gorgeous Plymouth Prowler or Corvette appearing in the game then, as well?

**MC:** Pass!

**NG:** Will MSR have different weather settings, and will the convertible cars get extra roof

to the city locations. For example, you're more likely to get fog in San Francisco than you are a heavy covering of snow! If it does rain or snow, then yes, you can close the roofs — but we still haven't decided what to do for the poor drivers of the Renault Spider — which doesn't come with any roof option at all! Perhaps an umbrella?

**NG:** Will the cars take damage in collisions and other accidents — or wouldn't the car manufacturers

like that?

**MC:** Given the many travels and the sheer amount of work that went into the game so far, I imagine that you have some interesting "adventures" to share with NG and its readers...

**MC:** Our Sega producer, Kats Sato, is not aware that his car, a high-powered Fiat, was driven by his associate producer at over 140mph on a test circuit to obtain the engine sound recordings — or at least, he won't be until he reads this...



Headlight effects are nothing new, but when used with Metropolis' hi-res engine, the impact is simply awesome

battle it out across the globe. "You have to beat an existing member in order to join the gang you want," Chudley explains, "and then you and the other members have to compete in the gang races and challenges throughout the city areas."

At press time, Bizarre was still tight-lipped

regarding other gameplay details of *Metropolis Street Racer*, but considering the company's previous efforts, Sega may have found a game that can do for Dreamcast what *Formula 1* did for PlayStation, namely, sell the system to serious racing fans in Europe and North America.



Unfortunately, since the cars are all licensed, they don't incur any damage when you crash



Many of the cars are convertibles, and you can even put their tops down when the weather allows

## FURBALLS

Bizarre Creations is also working on this strange platform action title for Dreamcast. Control several cute and cuddly animals with heavy weaponry and try to jump and blast your way through enemies to rescue your family.



Sure, they're cute, but they also pack some serious firepower

Can Acclaim's football franchise walk the walk on Dreamcast?

## NFL Quarterback Club 2000

FORMAT  
Dreamcast

PUBLISHER  
Acclaim

DEVELOPER  
Iguana Studios

RELEASE DATE  
Fall

ORIGIN  
U.S.

If the game industry is one thing, and one thing only, then it is surely predictable. And so it is no surprise that in a system's launch season there are not one, but two, NFL football titles: Sega's own NFL Football (first seen in **NG 54**), and Acclaim's NFL Quarterback Club 2000.

Developed by Iguana in Austin, Texas, *QBC 2000* brings all the expected Dreamcast enhancements to its game. First and foremost, the game will run at 60fps, in high-res, and with higher-poly player models and stadiums. Dreamcast's GD-ROMs (GD stands for Giga Disc) provide the storage space necessary to house more realistic and varied crowd

noise, more play-by-play commentary, and redbook audio music.

But according to Bill Lacoste, *QBC*'s project manager, the developer is planning some gameplay innovation above the obvious graphical and audio enhancements. A new "brake" button will replace the standard "turbo" button.

"The brake button allows the user to stop and plant as quickly as possible to make a cut upfield," says Lacoste. "In a true simulation, turbo is not a natural part of the game and should only be in arcade-style games. If a running back is better than the linebacker who is trying to tackle him, he should



Expect a high-res football sim running at 60fps, with fully modeled stadiums and a camera that zooms right down to the field for the kick-off



Expect to see the difference between actual grass (left) and turf (right). The game's broadcast-style interface includes headshots of the starters

not have to turbo to beat him. He should use his natural agility, speed, and acceleration to do it, not a turbo button."

The brake button will also enable players to create their own evasive moves (a.k.a. "juikes") by holding down the button while moving the analog stick. Lacoste also explains that the game will feature a new pinpoint passing mode:

"It allows you to throw the ball to a specific point in relation to the receiver," he says. "If you notice the defensive back is deep, you can throw the ball short and make the receiver come back for the ball."

These kinds of gameplay improvements certainly add to on-field realism, and Lacoste describes his vision of QBC as one that enable players to make "the moves and decisions that Brett Favre or Jamal Anderson would make on the field, and to have each NFL team perform more true to their real-life counterparts."

To help re-create the strategic authenticity of the NFL, Acclaim has hired Charlie Weis, the offensive coordinator of the New York Jets, as a consultant to the project. Weis worked on last year's

QBC for N64 as well, and Lacoste describes the coach's contributions as "invaluable" for his in-depth knowledge of each team's offensive and defensive tendencies, some of which will be directly incorporated into the create-your-own-team feature.

As Iguana is also developing the N64 version of Quarterback Club 2000, some of the logic code will be shared across both platforms, but the Dreamcast version's engine is designed to work off the Windows CE operating system. According to Jaime Gueves, Acclaim's executive sports director, all of the current members working on the Dreamcast version of NFL Quarterback Club 2000 have worked on at least two of the last QBC games. The game has been in development since the Dreamcast announcement a year ago.

Due to the extremely competitive nature of sports development ("feature stealing" is a huge developer phobia), Lacoste is keeping mum on Iguana's other plans.

"There are plenty of Dreamcast-specific features," says Lacoste, "because the machine is more powerful. I can't go into more detail yet, but you'll see them soon."

## BLADES OF VENGEANCE

Treyarch is creating this medieval action game, which looks as if it will combine hacking and slaying with a good dose of exploration and adventure. The graphics look sharp so far, and it looks like Crave could have a hit on its hands come release in Q4.



Every system needs a good action/adventure title, and it looks like blades of Vengeance may fill this niche nicely



NFL Quarterback Club 2000 replaces the "turbo" button with a "brake" button. Players can now artfully dodge tacklers instead of turboing past them. On-field characters (above) feature realtime shadows

What is speed without style? Don't ask Criterion — the developer's next title brings both to Dreamcast

## TrickStyle

FORMAT  
Dreamcast

PUBLISHER  
Acclaim

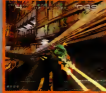
DEVELOPER  
Criterion

RELEASE DATE  
Fall 1999

ORIGIN  
U.K.



Instead of merely standing atop the deck, the racers can lie down on their fronts or lie back in a luge position to achieve higher speeds



Littered with nods to skate culture and cyberpunk, Criterion's *TrickStyle* (formerly known as *Velocity*) is a hoverboard racing game. Working from a concept generated by Lead Artist Ed Hayden, Designer Craig Sullivan has jammed a wealth of street-savvy skateboarding culture into the game. "I used to skate," Sullivan confesses, he also admits to having a few pro-skater friends. "So I still go to competitions and do a bit of research."

While *TrickStyle* is set in a near-future world, it remains true to Sullivan's skating roots. It's not just about being the fastest but also about being the most chic. Through careful deployment of certain tricks, your chosen character can smash through glass barriers or shift into a different method of controlling the hoverboard. Each of the nine selectable

characters offers unique attacks and stunts, such as the Russian boarder's spinning Cossack dance move.

"The point of the whole stunt system is the fact that it's a one-button system in its basic form," explains Hayden. "Then it builds up into these massive combos, a bit like a fighting game." Judging by the demonstration given to *Next Generation*, mastery of the control system can result in some sensuously memorable stunts being performed. According to Sullivan, "That's a typical Japanese thing. Take something like *Street Fighter* — you can watch someone play it in an arcade and you'll know within ten seconds whether that person is good. That's the difference between being good and being really good. I want that to be apparent in this title."

Given the wonderfully fluid motion of the



New hoverboards become available via completing several pre-ordained challenges scattered throughout, such as pulling stunts on a half-pipe, with the rewarded decks better suited to certain courses than the standard one



Criterion's levels are staged around three cities — London, Manhattan, and Tokyo — and each bears futuristic touches. Tokyo is partially submerged due to a post-global warming flood



### MARIQUETTE HANDLERS

Despite its terrible title (which will no doubt change if the game gets picked up for the U.S.), this game promises *Carnage Heart*-like strategy combined with giant robots. Build, customize, and program your Mecha to battle others in the arena.

characters as they flow from flips to rolls, creating such a believable animation system has been no small obstacle for the programming team. Rather than relying on hand animation or motion capture, a highly effective hybrid of traditional preset sequences coupled with physics-calculated motion has been created from scratch. Described by the team as a "layer" technique, the characters' movements are generated on the fly.

"We have an unlimited range of poses that depend on the physics — what speed you're going, whether you're turning, and what orientation you're at," explains Lead Programmer Sean Turner. Watching characters shift and match the landscape as it races beneath them is enjoyable in itself, a step beyond Nintendo's 1080° snowboarding, the current benchmark for such animations.

Building this complex routine has devoured almost three-quarters of the development schedule, but it doesn't appear to have impaired other aspects of the game's construction. An emphasis has also been placed on exploiting the polygon power of Dreamcast and high-end PCs, creating interactive locations populated with numerous pedestrians and vehicles. At one point, it's even possible to surf up

onto the roof of a passing train and ride along it. Other, more devious, tactics can also be employed. "Say, for instance, you're going down the track and there are crates and stuff in the way — you can knock them into the path of people behind you," says Hayden.

Across each of the three cities — Tokyo, London, and Manhattan — there are a total of 15 courses to complete, opening out from a central hub area. Once a full city has been uncovered, it's possible to create your own routes around it, thanks to a spline-based approach to the track design. You can piece together a circuit or route from the various level sections to create a new race, which can then be saved either to the PC's hard disk or to Dreamcast's Visual Memory Unit.

If all goes to plan, the multiplayer mode will support up to 16 players for Internet play on both the PC and Dreamcast versions, a vast improvement over Sega Rally 2's meager four-player action.

With a licensed music deal in the cards and three more months of quality development time, there's still a way to go before Criterion hits its projected velocity. But judging by what's already there, Acclaim's first Dreamcast title is setting a pace that other publishers would be keen to match.



The point of the game lies in programming your robots to fight rather than merely testing your reflexes in combat

The power of Dreamcast has been tapped for the game's elaborate backgrounds. Rising cityscapes are highly detailed with no need for heavy fogging (which can be used to hide the limitations of a graphics engine)

Cool Boarders: slick, or **skating on thin ice?**

## Cool Boarders DC

FORMAT  
Dreamcast

PUBLISHER  
UEP Systems

DEVELOPER  
UEP Systems

RELEASE DATE  
September (Japan)

ORIGIN  
Japan



While Cool Boarders has plenty of tracks and its graphics have obviously improved from the last incarnation, it remains to be seen whether UEP can ramp up the gameplay for the next generation of games

**C**ool Boarders opened the floodgates for snowboarding games on PlayStation, inspiring (it seems) every developer on both sides of the Pacific to try its hands at the genre. So it's fitting that the first snowboarding title to grace Dreamcast is from the original Cool Boarders team at UEP.

Thanks to Dreamcast's 3D graphics technology,

the environments are the most impressive we've seen in a snowboarding game, and they stick to a solid 60fps at all times. The graphic upgrade helps to convey a much better sense of speed as you slide down the mountain, making Cool Boarders DC the most visually immersive snowboarding title we've played.

Aside from the visuals, however, the game feels fairly similar to UEP's snowboarding games of old, which isn't necessarily a good thing — Cool Boarders was the first, but not necessarily the best, snowboarding game out there, and in the early version we played, the control is nowhere near the level set by Nintendo's 1080° Snowboarding, although tricks, which are triggered by a button-press and joystick direction, are way easier to pull off, as are high-scoring combos.

In addition to the requisite downhill tracks and half-pipe, some tracks will have special trick zones set up to enable particularly spectacular stunts. Other features include a two player split-screen mode as well as a possible link-up with the Neo Geo Pocket Color version of Cool Boarders.

The first generation of software for any system is full of games that look better than they play, and for snowboarding, which isn't very deep to begin with, that may be enough of an innovation to keep gamers happy. But if UEP can improve the control, it should find several publishers bidding to release the title in the States — the game has the looks, and if UEP can get the gameplay right, it could have the depth necessary to bring a traditionally shallow niche into the next generation successfully.



Look for a name change if this comes out here, since UEP essentially gave SCEA the rights to the Cool Boarders name in North America



Is fishing the **hook Dreamcast** needs to succeed?

## Get Bass



Sure, it's a fishing game — but it's also one of the best Dreamcast titles we've played so far

**B**elieve it or not, this fishing game is one of the best Dreamcast experiences yet.

With the overwhelming Japanese fascination with fishing still going strong, it was only a matter of time before Sega of Japan released an angling title for Dreamcast. While the mere idea of a graphics-intensive 3D fishing game may seem weird, the funny thing is that the game, called *Get Bass*, is one of the most addictive titles yet released for the fledgling system.

The game features three different play modes: arcade, practice, and consumer. In the arcade mode, players must catch as much weight as they can before the clock runs out. Practice mode offers laddadassical anglers a chance to hone their skills by taking on different areas of the lake at their own pace. While there's no doubt that both of these play

modes are completely entertaining, the oddly named consumer mode is the real heart and soul of *Get Bass*. In consumer mode, players enter in their names and join various competitions that take place over one or more days of morning, afternoon, and evening fishing runs. The player with the most weight at the end of the tourney wins and gets to move on to the next competition.

The fishing engine itself doesn't change much from mode to mode, but why would you mess with near-perfection? Using the joystick — or for players lucky enough to land one, the special fishing controller released by Sega — anglers pick a lake location, select a lure from their tackle box, and cast their line into the water. Once there, players will have to use all of the fishing tricks at their disposal in an attempt to convince the virtual fish below the surface that that bit of plastic with a hook in it is actually a savory treat. The AI routines that determine the actions of the fish are truly amazing and take into account weather conditions, time of day, depth of water, lure type, and lure motion when determining whether or not a fish will strike.

*Get Bass* is one of those games that will appeal to just about everyone on some level or another. Technology fans will appreciate its sharp look and fantastic AI and animation, sporting fans will appreciate the game's realism, RPG fans will stay up nights trying to unlock all the hidden locations and secret lures, and hardcore gaming fans will be sucked in by the desire to land the biggest bass and save it to memory. If you've got a Dreamcast, and you're looking for something to make your PlayStation-owning friends shut up for a little while, you owe it to yourself to grab a copy of this game.



There are so many different modes of play that there is something fun for every type of gamer

FORMAT	Dreamcast
PUBLISHER	Sega Japan
DEVELOPER	Sega Japan
RELEASE DATE	Out now (Japan)
ORIGIN	Japan

## REDLINE RACER

FORMAT	arcade
PUBLISHER	Midway
DEVELOPER	Midway Studios

Criterion Studios' arcade-style PC motorcycle racer hit more than a few speed bumps in its conversion to Dreamcast. Retaining the brisk gameplay speed of its Windows-based cousin, *Redline Racer* unfortunately suffers from texture quality and polygon count in order to achieve its 60fps visuals, which, as a result, are muddy and plagued by pronounced draw-in. Ultimately damning for its title, however, are its poor opponent AI and bike handling, which result in mere unexciting collisions — and ultimately frustration — as you struggle to stay on the course and stay in one piece.

**RATING** ★★★★★



With bad graphics and sub-par gameplay, there isn't really anything to redeem this poor excuse for a game

**RATING**

★★★★★



0.02



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE HINT >

OUT SMARTING IT WILL ONLY  
**MAKE IT SMARTER.**

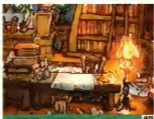
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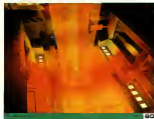
Our monthly report from the front line of games in development



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**S**ure, Dreamcast makes it harder to be excited about games for the established systems. But take heart, we've scouted out some winners for N64, PC, PSX, and arcade

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A wheeled robot in an offbeat adventure

**46 Tony Hawk Pro Skater** PlayStation  
For the right moves, call a professional

**48 Racing Lagoon** PlayStation  
A racing game that's really an RPG?

**49 Legend of Mana** PlayStation  
Finally, a sequel to Secret of Mana

**52 Supreme Snowboarding** PC, DC  
It's snowboarding, it's supreme

**53 Silent Scope** Arcade  
A sniper simulator was bound to happen

**54 Silent Bomber** PlayStation  
A pretender to the Contra throne?

**55 Rising Zan** PlayStation  
Is the world ready for a samurai cowboy?

**59 Rally Masters** Multi  
A racing game from Sweden... hehmm...

**59 Werewolf** PC  
One guess what this game is about

**60 Sanity** PC  
Time to hurt down the psychics

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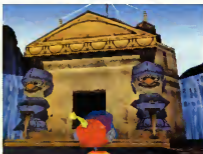
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# SPROCKET

Think there's nothing but poorly made Mario clones for N64? You haven't seen this platformer



The steady camera primarily follows Sprocket from behind as he moves between both interior- and exterior-based challenges. While there are some enemies to overcome, Sprocket's gameplay chiefly requires players to navigate obstacle-ridden environments, solving puzzles in the process



One puzzle involves repairing this roller coaster, and then redesigning it! Players can then ride their own creations

While it's well known that fiction imitates life, it's rather ironic that several years after Douglas Coupland's novel *Microserfs*, four former Microsoft employees have actually banded together to form a game-development company. Like Valve's (*Half-Life*) Gabe Newell, who's also a Microsoft alum, Seattle-based Sucker Punch Productions was born not just out of a want of something different, but from a desire to bring some fresh, high-quality games to market. This is fortunate for N64 owners, as Sucker Punch's first title is readying to shake things up a bit for that system.

As one would expect from an N64 platformer, *Sprocket* is a colorful, cartoony adventure that puts players in control of a wacky character facing tremendous odds. In this case, the title character is a maintenance robot who must save an amusement park after all the rides have been sabotaged by a disgruntled park

masochist before opening day. And not unlike *Mario 64* and *Banjo-Kazooie*, it already shows signs of that special appeal that should enable the game to transcend the younger audience.

"It's Bugs Bunny meets Isaac Newton," says Producer and Sucker Punch

**"One of the first things we decided was that Sprocket was going to be wheeled"**

Brian Fleming, producer

co-founder Brian Fleming. "It's got the fun parts of *Bugs Bunny*, but then there's the physics underneath it that really ties it into reality. The physics engine has really been important as the foundation that we've built this game on top of."

Fleming makes it perfectly clear that the game is about fun, and the physics engine is only the foundation for the gameplay—something completely new to N64 platformers.

"That's really an important

FORMAT  
N64

PUBLISHER  
TBA

DEVELOPER  
Sucker Punch Productions

RELEASE DATE  
Fall/Winter '99

ORIGIN  
U.S.



Sucker Punch has spared no effort in creating fantastic lighting and effects for its first game



These hilarious mini-games introduce the player to Sprocket's throwing mechanic. The chicken actually plays exceptional tic-tac-toe and players must hit the chicken while it's making its move in order to keep it from making the right move

distinction," says Fleming, wary that other physics-based games such as *Trespasser* have fallen into the failed-experiment realm. But Fleming explains that the more unique aspects of the design stem directly from the main character of *Sprocket* himself.

"One of the first things we decided," Fleming says, "was that *Sprocket* was going to be wheeled." (Cute enough, *Sprocket* looks like the illegitimate child born to Marvin the Martian and one of the Super Nintendo's *Uni Racers*.) *Sprocket* is also without arms, but his tractor-beam method of moving objects is not only impressive, it's downright clever.

"We really wanted to manipulate objects in 3D space," Fleming explains, "but didn't feel like we had the technology or the solutions to solve arbitrary

"and using the joystick I can swing *Sprocket* back-and-forth and get a high jump off of it."

The rest of some *Pitfall*-style swinging is just one of the simpler mechanics presented in *Sprocket*'s seven diverse amusement-park theme worlds. But if the theme-park scenario sounds cliché, rest easy: *Sucker Punch*'s design is far from standard fare.

"There's a little bit of Mayan or Incan architecture in one of the worlds that seems kind of common in these kinds of games," admits Fleming, "but in general we've tried to innovate — we stayed away from the 'Haunted Mansion' specifically because it seemed like every game in the genre has done one, and there's no snow level either."

Good news. Yet, as sure as Mario had to find his stars, there are numerous collectibles for *Sprocket* to gather. Players must gather 12 tickets from each world and find pieces of a broken ride that must be fixed, as well as collect tokens to gain



Currently a staff of 14, many of whom are former Microsoft employees, is hard at work on *Sprocket*

## *Sprocket*'s worlds are far from bland environs where collecting odd-shaped items is the sole mission

orientation problems, like hands grabbing every different-shaped and -sized object. So the tractor beam, while we think it's a tremendous innovation, also is a simplification in some ways."

The beam adds an interesting component to *Sprocket*'s otherwise standard set of moves, which include a jump, a double jump, and a slam move. In addition to using his beam to picking up objects and throwing them, *Sprocket* can use it to grab onto things.

"I'm hanging from this handle by the tractor beam," Fleming says as he demonstrates gameplay in an early level,

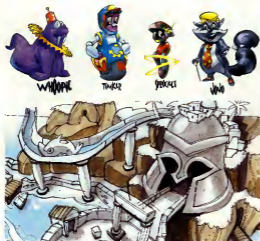


*Sprocket*'s tractor beam and throwing mechanism are clearly demonstrated here as he tosses this garbage can with precise aim



The "Bee-Were" funhouse (below) is appropriately guarded by large bees





access to vehicles and new moves.

But Sprocket's worlds are far from bland environs where collecting odd-shaped items is the sole mission. Sucker Punch has developed an intriguing realm similar to actual amusement park — there are plenty of vehicles to ride, including a flying carpet, a huge forklift, a motorcycle,

**"The top-shelf N64 games right now are all pretty much maxing out the N64. You're not going to see games look a lot better"**

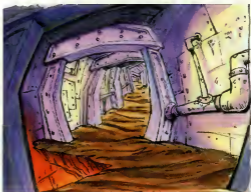
Chris Zimmerman, programmer

a bumper boat, and a hot-dog-shaped go-kart. Other superbly designed puzzles play more like mini-games. A world Fleming refers to as "Color and Paint" presents many color-oriented puzzles. Players must jump in pools to turn Sprocket the proper color to enter one area. There are also some painting puzzles, where players must paint objects their proper color to open areas.

Design kudos aside, the scripting and effects that are being polished up in Sprocket right now are worth noting. And the man behind the physics engine, Chris Zimmerman, feels that there's not much left of N64 to be tapped visually.

"The top-shelf N64 games right now," Zimmerman says, "they're all pretty much maxing out the N64. You're not going to see games look like now, so you really have to count your tranges."

Unlike the alienated characters in Coupland's novel, Zimmerman, Fleming, and the other two Sucker Punch founders, Chris Oberg and Darrell Plank, were at Microsoft in the fairly early days, and their well-planned and competitive approach to Sprocket is a testimony to Microsoft's



**The prolific Peter Chan (long-time conceptual artist for LucasArts) helped create the look of Sprocket along with Sucker Punch Art Director Dev Madan, who had previously worked for DC Comics, and was one of the first artists at Humongous Entertainment**

success. Sucker Punch has done a fantastic job breaking into this industry, and if all goes according to plan, Sprocket should be the first of many enjoyable and innovative titles from the company.

But wait — how'd they get the name Sucker Punch?

Fleming says it's got no special significance beyond the fact that Zimmerman had tried to get Sucker Punch used as a codename for various Microsoft projects, and it was habitually rejected as something not fit to be leaked to the press. It was also the first name Zimmerman's wife had crossed off on a list of potential monikers.

"What's the point of being in the games business," says Fleming, "if you can't have a cool name for your company?"

Reason enough for us.

NE



Players must scale this statue (top) of a top-wearing Whoopee the Weelus, the good mesco

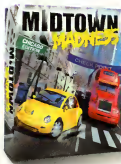


Sprocket, seen here in his hot-dog go-kert, is ready to race



0-60 (off a skyscraper)? Yes.

Racers, start your moyhem. Grob hold of one of 10 wild vehicles and race through the windy streets of Chicoga, where you'll have to deal with tough opponents, alleyways, drawbridges, newspaper rocks, tunnels, and the police. Throw in five race modes and over 50 city landmarks, and there are plenty of sights to see. Just don't drive like a tourist.



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**Microsoft**

# TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER

In a world full of skateboarding titles that are anything but "extreme," Activision calls in the professionals



Thanks to the game's simple control schema, tricks like these are a breeze to pull off — it's all in the timing



The two-player split-screen competition is shaping up to be a great party game — invite your friends

FORMAT  
PlayStation

PUBLISHER  
Activision

DEVELOPER  
Neversoft

RELEASE DATE  
October 1999

ORIGIN  
U.S.

In recent years, it has seemed that every other week sees the release of a new skateboarding (or snowboarding) title. Most of them — let's face it — just don't cut it, all too often featuring miserable graphics, suspicious control schemes, and a complete failure to capture the thrill of the sport they presume to simulate. In fact, most have been pathetic.

Which is why Pro Skater from Activision and developer Neversoft might just have the edge: they have the help and expertise of nine of the world's best skaters, including the one whom many would say is the world's best, Tony Hawk. Each has given input, helped in the design, and lent their personality and name to the game, and Hawk himself was extensively motion captured.

Judging by the beta version provided to Next Generation, the plan seems to have worked.

The game features 10 different courses, which range from the expected half-pipes and skate parks to natural settings like a downtown area and a schoolyard as well as a few more

"extreme" hills. Every course has short cuts and hidden areas and a few "interactive objects."

The trick system is remarkably simple; generally, one button and a direction on the control pad triggers a move, which is then held until the landing. Timing on the landing is critical, but you can squeeze in as many tricks while airborne as the brief time allows. Regrettably, still pictures and words can't convey the terrific way the game feels, or the responsiveness of the control, so you'll just have to take our word for it.

The game will feature a single run as well as a career mode, but we're betting most players will be hooked on the head-to-head, split-screen two-player competition. Admittedly, the frame rate takes a slight hit during two-player, but not by much.

Simply put, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater is shaping up to be the kind of skateboarding game that pretenders like Xtreme only dream of being. Very cool, and definitely worth looking out for.

NTS



The animation is fluid yet dynamic, contributing in no small way to the game's overall sense of speed



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# RACING LAGOON

If anyone can combine a racing game and an RPG, it's Square



Racing the highways of Yokohama is what this hybrid RPG features instead of battles

The history of gaming is dotted with odd RPG hybrids — *Riding Hero* for Neo Geo followed the adventures of a motorcycle jockey, and we're still scratching our heads over a bizarre game for Turbo Grafx that was a combination RPG and tennis game, in which the final boss was none other than the devil himself. However, when the biggest name in RPGs, Square, gets into the game, we tend to sit up and take notice.

As the title implies, *Racing Lagoon* is an RPG/racing game. Set in Yokohama, the game follows the intense rivalry between two street racing gangs, the Bay Lagoon Racers and the Honmoku Night Racers (Honmoku is a suburb of Yokohama). Players move around the city using a top-down, 2D map — much like in a standard RPG. The difference is that instead of fighting battles, players race cars around Yokohama.

The racing portions of the game are surprisingly well executed. Granted, we're sure the *Gran Turismo* and *R4* design teams aren't losing any sleep over it, but the cars control well, the environments look good, and there are the usual special effects like headlights that actually work. If you win, you get to keep the rival's car and earn "reward points." These points can go toward buying better parts for your own car (the



The racing portions of the game are coming along nicely, considering Square hasn't done a driver since Nasir Gabelli's *Red Racer*

parts can also simply be looted from the loser's machine). When every part of the car has been upgraded, the entire car gets a level up.

This early in the development cycle, little is known of the game's exact storyline or characters, although the cars all have fantasy names like the "Cancer 3000." However, considering that Square managed to deftly combine an RPG with a fighting game in *Ehrgeiz* (see review, page 92), we're willing to bet it can make *Racing Lagoon* a game to watch. **NE**



The game also has a storyline and characters to meet and greet — it's an RPG, after all



Like all good modern racing games, *Racing Lagoon* includes high-res replays of every race — they make nice screenshots, don't they?

**FORMAT**  
PlayStation

**PUBLISHER**  
Square

**DEVELOPER**  
Square

**RELEASE DATE**  
Summer 2000

**ORIGIN**  
Japan

# LEGEND OF MANA

It's taken a few years, but Square is finally giving the legions of *Secret of Mana* fans a sequel — one that might actually reach the U.S.



Every new area revealed on the map is possessed of its own "Mana nature," the fundamental force of the universe within the game

Although it was never as high profile as the *Final Fantasy* series, Stateside gamers have many fond memories of *Secret of Mana* (known as *Seiken Densetsu* in Japan — literally "Legend of the Saint Sword"). And though there was a sequel released in Japan a few years back, it never made the trek across the Pacific. This disappointment is not likely to happen with the latest title in the series, *Legend of Mana*, as Square seems committed to a U.S. release for nearly all its titles.

Although the main characters hadn't been officially named at press time, at the beginning of the game you will be able to choose between either a male or female character. The main story is also a bit sketchy at the moment, but a number of the minor plot threads and subquests will hinge on which NPCs you choose to join in your party, and you can bring as many as three at a time. For example, Dane, a very serious cat-woman, has a friend in trouble and is looking for help. Luri, a "Knight of the Lapis Lazuli," is looking for a missing comrade. Most of these secondary characters are quite fanciful in nature, being half-human hybrids of animals, plants, and even inanimate objects, like the aptly named jewel collector, Teapot.

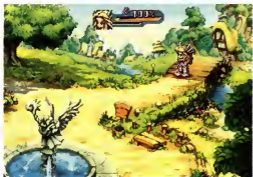
The game's most interesting feature is the way in which the world is revealed. At the beginning of the game, the map is suspiciously empty, but as each boss



Yup, it's another big, colorful, magnificent RPG from Square — and best of all, odds are good it will come to the U.S.

creature is defeated (or sometimes just at certain points in the story), the player is rewarded with an artifact. By placing these artifacts in the available slots on the map, new dungeons, towns, and other areas will "grow." Placing the same artifact in a different slot on the map will generate a different area to explore.

Like its predecessors, *Legend of Mana* will feature multiplayer support, so two players can separately control one character apiece at the same time. So bring a friend, as this will be one game RPG fans won't want to be without. **CITE**



It's not in 3D, but in this case that's probably all to the good. With a graphic style reminiscent of the illustrations in a children's fantasy book, the *Mana* games would most likely lose much of their charm if converted to cold, textured polygons



FORMAT  
PlayStation

PUBLISHER  
Square

DEVELOPER  
Square

RELEASE DATE  
Summer 2000

ORIGIN  
Japan

*KONOKO'S ONLY FUTURE  
IS TO AVENGE HER PAST.*



The background of the cover is a dark, industrial environment with a large fire in the lower-left corner. A character in a dark, futuristic suit is in the center, holding a glowing yellow energy sword. To the right, a large, metallic, bird-like creature with a glowing eye is visible. The overall scene is filled with action and destruction.

# Oni

AN ACTION GAME LIKE NO OTHER.

**B**ungie Software, the company that rewrote the rules for strategy games with Myth and Myth II, introduces *Oni*, an action game that will redefine the genre. As Konoko, you'll fight through huge futuristic 3D environments using a ground-breaking combination of gunplay and hand-to-hand combat to defeat hundreds of devious opponents. From your first bullet to your last kick, surviving *Oni*'s high-tech world of crime and deception will take everything you've got.

Coming this Fall for Windows® and Mac OS.

For screen shots and additional information visit [oni.bungie.com](http://oni.bungie.com)

**BUNGIE**

# SUPREME SNOWBOARDING

Is PC ready for another snowboarding game?



Six riders and numerous snowboards are at the player's disposal

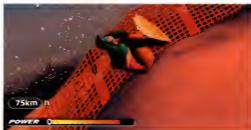


Daytime, sunset, and even nighttime racing are captured beautifully with volumetric and colored lighting

Just saying the number of PlayStation snowboarding games alone could trigger an avalanche of inventory large enough to bury a small village in the Swiss Alps. Yet the PC's older-skewing audience has not suffered the surge of mediocre snowboarding titles to the same extent. Now, little-known Housemarque (out of Helsinki, Finland) has designed a snowboarding game to harness the high-end PC and Dreamcast. And while it's still early, the game seems to capture the better aspects of its 32-bit brethren.

When completed, the game will offer several single and multiplayer modes and a total of nine courses spread across three mountains. The first mountain is a standard ski resort, while the other two, tentatively called Alpine and Forest, fall into the "extreme" category. Unlike the narrow course racing offered in some snowboarding games, *Supreme Snowboarding* will enable players to break from the boundaries of the trail and explore the surrounding terrain, and each mountain will feature a half-pipe and some of the park-style ramps for tricks.

When *Next Generation* sat down to play *Supreme Snowboarding* on a Dual Pentium II 550Mhz machine, we were



The bone-modeled characters are multi-textured and single-skinned, and they animate with lifelike quality

impressed with the easy-to-use keyboard-control system. The game already incorporates a solid physics system, and coupled with several cool course designs, it enables players to pull off some unbelievable jumps while still maintaining a semblance of realism. A flexible replay system also enables players to replay specific course sections over and over.

While the title wasn't playable yet on Dreamcast, Housemarque is confident it can have a Dreamcast version ready to ship before the holidays, simultaneously with the PC version. The developer is also hoping to tap the Dreamcast modem, so PC and Dreamcast players can compete against one another online in the same multiplayer races. Sega announced its modem plans at E3, so there may just be time enough for that to happen. **NG**

**FORMAT**  
PC, Dreamcast

**PUBLISHER**  
Infogrames

**DEVELOPER**  
Housemarque

**RELEASE DATE**  
Fall 1999

**ORIGIN**  
Finland

# SILENT SCOPE

Konami's latest arcade gun game puts you in the sniper's seat



The telescopic sight can be used throughout the game for "voyeur view" to win bonus lives by scoping out bikini-clad girls who are lounging around rooftop swimming pools, in their apartments, etc. Accidentally shooting at hostages or innocent bystanders costs you a life

**Y**ou'll know when your local arcade has Konami's next gun game — it's the one with a full-sized sniper rifle mounted to the control panel equipped with an oversized telescopic sight. Drop in your quarters, and bang, you're a government sniper.

The gameplay is simple. Terrorists have just kidnapped the President and First Family right out of their motorcade in downtown Chicago during broad daylight. Your assignment is to track the terrorists, take them out, and rescue the hostages. The gimmick? The sniper scope built into the gun actually works.

Aiming the rifle at the 27" main monitor projects a translucent targeting that overlays whatever object you point at, but peer through the scope and you'll get an extreme closeup (a 1"x1" section of the screen) courtesy of a very small, LCD-type monitor that is actually built into the scope. As you move the rifle side to side and up and down on its gimbal mount, a potentiometer in the gunbase sends a location signal to game software, identifying where the gun is aiming and controlling the scope's video feed appropriately.

The closeup scope views are integral to the gameplay. Acquiring enemies and finishing them off demands continual, expert deployment of the telescopic sight. Killing enemies requires multiple body shots or a single headshot. Combined with fast-paced movement, striking versatility of settings, and brutal kill-or-be-killed action, the scope adds a tremendous new dynamic to a fairly standard hostage-rescue scenario. (Not



A tiny second monitor provides the player with impressive closeups through a telescopic sight



surprisingly, actual U.S. military personnel have been pumping quarters into Silent Scope like mad, as it's been on test near a Chicago-area military base.)

The action varies across several stages, including a fast-moving highway shootout, a night-vision assault on a seduced mansion, and a warehouse setting where enemies are barely visible — even with the scope.

And while the scope may be silent, the game isn't. A cacophony of audio effects, a movie-like musical score, and — at crucial moments — verbal instructions from your backup team given via walkie-talkie voiceover, keep it loud. You may find yourself making noise as well — gasping out loud at the realism the scope provides. We did.

NE

For variety and skill-building, Silent Scope also offers "target range mode," featuring Hogan's A-list-style training in an underground shooting range, as well as "time attack mode," which pits you against terrorist sub-bosses under stopwatch pressure

**FORMAT**  
Arcade

**PUBLISHER**  
Konami

**DEVELOPER**  
Konami

**RELEASE DATE**  
Fall 1999

**ORIGIN**  
Japan



Looking through the scope is a bit like looking through a camcorder view-finder, but it adds a huge amount of fun to the game



# SILENT BOMBER

Bandai's latest third-person shooter brings back the simple fun of run-and-gun action



Each level is completed through the destruction of defined targets. Big laser cannons are just one example



One of the surprise hits of the Tokyo Game show, Bandai's *Silent Bomber* could be a breath of fresh air for PlayStation enthusiasts. With many games becoming over-sophisticated, the third-person shooter is a return to the days of simple gameplay. Based around mechanical characters such as the *Gundam* anime concept in which Bandai specializes, *Silent Bomber* is comparable to Konami's old-school *Contra* series. Thankfully, though, it is far superior to the last two PlayStation versions of that title.

The most important aspect of the game is the way its control style promotes the overall pace. Movement is controlled via the analog stick,

thrown and must be placed next to targets.

Destroying targets, which range from generators to mighty space cannons, completes each level. Of course, all are well defended by missile launchers, robot guards, and force fields. And if the colorful pre-rendered scenery is reminiscent of the glory days of coin-ops, the quality of the bosses confirms the charms of *Silent Bomber*.

With several months' development ahead, it will be interesting to see how the game evolves. Following its TGS success, it could become a high-profile title for Bandai. The only criticism at this stage concerns the ease of play and some clumsy camera angles. But when a game has the potential to be as enjoyable as *Silent Bomber*, such gripes might be overcome.

A three-quarter view is just one of the factors that makes the game so easy and enjoyable to play. Frantic speed and intuitive controls are others

Based around mechanical characters such as *Gundam*, *Silent Bomber* is comparable to Konami's old-school *Contra* series

while the X button triggers jumping. But it is the weapon control that really impresses. The square button operates the default bomb option. This activates a visible blue "cone" which locks on to any enemies in range. Once locked on, up to two bombs can be thrown from distance.

Other offensive weapon pick-ups include napalm, paralysis liquid (which knocks out electrical units for a period of time), and the strangely named gravity liquid. These are cycled using the L1 shoulder button but cannot be



One of the most telling features of *Silent Bomber* is the scale of the bosses. The gravity-liquid power-up (above) proves highly effective

FORMAT  
PlayStation

PUBLISHER  
Bandai

DEVELOPER  
Bandai

RELEASE DATE  
TBA

ORIGIN  
Japan



# RISING ZAN: SAMURAI GUNMAN

Cowboys and samurais — that's what we played when we were kids. Now anyone with a PlayStation can join in, too, thanks to this utterly bizarre Japanese import



**E**very so often, a game comes along that simply refuses to go with the crowd. *Rising Zan* definitely fits into that category, although it doesn't so much move against the flow as it absurdly strikes out sideways.

And we mean that as a good thing. From a fully 3D, third-person perspective, the game follows the adventures of Rising Zan, a quick-draw gunfighter who once got his butt kicked by a man wielding only a sword. Having trained in the Far East as a samurai, he returns to find his hometown beset by evil forces. Naturally, the self-styled "Super Ultra Sexy Hero," his six-gun in one hand



Come out straw-men!  
Send this kid to hell!

If you think the dialogue end characters are belly-laugh worthy, wait until you hear the opening theme song. "Johnny No More"



and katana in the other, decides he's best qualified to save the hapless populace.

As you might have guessed, this isn't the most serious game on the planet, yet it's remarkably not self-conscious about it, and the perfectly straight-faced delivery just makes everything even funnier. The first-level boss, for example (a masked giant with a mace for a right arm), speaks entirely in bass-toned, unintelligible grunts, but everyone in the game seems to understand him just fine.

The game has a total of 10 levels, each with a boss as well as a hidden character, Sapphire, Zan's female counterpart. There are also a number of hidden modes, like the suicide mode, in which a single hit will kill any enemy, but a single hit will also kill the player. Some of these modes are unique to the U.S. release — although the game came out in April in Japan, AgeTec (formerly known as ASCII) is making a number of additions for its U.S. debut. Zan can perform a number of suspiciously flashy special moves which earn him "sexy points." Accumulating enough points earns badges, and badges unlock the modes, including a surprising one that costs all twelve badges. We're honor bound not to reveal its secrets, but no one has ever done such a thing before, and most players will definitely get a kick out of it.

Simply put, *Rising Zan* is about as out there as you can get. It's quirky like no other game we've ever come across, and we hope that it will find the audience it deserves.



*Rising Zan* is about as over the top as a game can possibly get, and it does so with no apologies — kind of hard to resist, if you ask us

FORMAT  
PlayStation

PUBLISHER  
AgeTec

DEVELOPER  
UEP Systems

RELEASE DATE  
September

ORIGIN  
Japan



The game features a few different gameplay styles — and yes, that's a mine cart level



**"ALWAYS FREEZE YOUR LEFTOVERS."**  
~ SARGE





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# RALLY MASTERS



Swedes already make the safest rally-racing games — can they make them fun, too?



A championship editor enables players to customize their own season by including any aspect of any of the main four styles of racing. As a further incentive to finish all of the modes, there are plenty of bonuses



Digital Illusions' realistic physics model applies force individually to each wheel



Rally Masters captures oil of the cars currently competing in the 1999 Championship season, from authentic manufacturers such as Peugeot and Mitsubishi

The road to racing-game dominance is a long one, but from obscure beginnings as the developer of Pinball Dreams for Amiga, Swedish developer Digital Illusions is slowly becoming a recognized name among U.S. gamers, thanks to last year's visually impressive MotorHead for PlayStation, the arcade-style racer published by Fox.

"Then Gran Turismo came along and changed the entire playing field," admits a laughing Fredrik Liliegren, Digital Illusions' managing director. Liliegren insists a sequel to MotorHead was never in the cards, and the team began Rally Masters last June when the World Rally license was offered to them by U.K. publisher Grem'in.

In addition to all the authentic 1999 World Rally vehicles, Rally Masters includes classic rally cars, what's more, the illegal Group B killers (these hard-to-control monsters were banned as a result of their tendency to plow straight into the nearest group of spectators) have also been modeled and form an integral part of the proceedings.

Digital Illusions is modeling three categories of rallying: normal stage-based rally, a rallycross championship similar to V-Rally (four cars simultaneously on the track), and an arcade mode à la Sega Rally. Each mode boasts an internal structure sufficiently intricate and with enough longevity to stand isolated as individual racing titles. The game's six countries, 45 tracks, and many more vehicles are distributed among the four championship

modes according to their varying requirements. And you can rest assured that the usual time attack, single race, two-player mode (four on N64 and more on PC) also makes an appearance.

While the group has stretched itself across three platforms, the visuals and audio are promising. Predictably, the PC version is the most aesthetically pleasing, but the PlayStation and N64 builds are doing a remarkable job in trying to keep up. But as MotorHead demonstrated last year, and as a confident Liliegren suggests, "We know technology because we're from Sweden. It's our forte."

Maybe so, so let's hope the game stands up to Japan's forte — great gameplay.

NEB

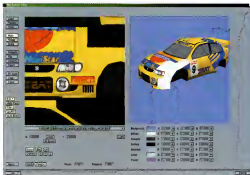
FORMAT  
PC, N64, PlayStation

PUBLISHER  
Infogrames

DEVELOPER  
Digital Illusions

RELEASE DATE  
TBA (U.K. — July)

ORIGIN  
Sweden



Texturing the models is a painstaking process, as Digital Illusions wants them to be as accurate a representation as possible

# WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE

Can a combination of high-tech PC development and age-old gothic sensibilities push a veteran pen-and-paper RPG into the next millennium? ASC hopes so



The game uses the Unreal engine, which, of course, means a lot of cool effects and a large environment



The developers are committed to making the game as action-oriented as possible, including a fair amount of combat as well as puzzles and the casting of spells

For over a decade, pen-and-paper RPG company White Wolf has had a runaway success with its "World of Darkness" series of games, including *Vampire: The Masquerade* and *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*. Indeed, the most surprising thing about their recent development as PC games (*Vampire* is being developed by Nihilistic for Activision, as reported in **NG 53**) is that it is recent — you'd think somebody would have done this years ago.

Still, perhaps it's just as well they waited this long: *Werewolf* is currently being developed by Dreamforge, with the project headed up by for ASC by Travis Williams (who, incidentally, got his start with White Wolf... hmmm...), the same outfit responsible for last year's offbeat shocker, the graphic adventure *Serbanium*. The story focuses on an angry, angry young man named Ryan McCulloch, who discovers his Werewolf (or Garou) heritage as part of the White Howler clan. The White Howlers were the protectors of the Earth spirit Gaea, but were all but wiped out generations ago by the force of all evil, the entity known as the Wyrm. So guess who's out to kick some Wyrm butt?

Dreamforge is using the Unreal engine, but the game is seen from both a third-person as well as first-person

perspective, which obviously meant a number of modifications. The perspective is a direct result of the subject matter, however, since no werewolf game would be complete without the character being able to transform from human, to half-human/half-wolf, to wolf form and back, a process accomplished by morphing the character's skin in realtime. Ryan has different senses and abilities in each form, and part of the game's challenge is to discover when each form is appropriate.

But *Werewolf* isn't a slow-paced graphic adventure — far from it. It includes real-time combat and a fair amount of action, using a system unapologetically inspired by the mechanics found in *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. Dubbed "Z-lock," a single keystroke keeps Ryan facing his opponent at all times, preventing the player from getting turned around and confused.

Given the wealth of excellent source material, its state-of-the-art engine and technical innovation, and the track record of the developer with tense, atmospheric, nightmarish subject matter, we'd be very surprised if *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* turned out to be anything less than a nail-biting experience.



What good is being able to transform into a werewolf if you can't look cool doing it? Much of the game, including morphing routines, is seen from a third-person view

FORMAT  
PC

PUBLISHER  
Dreamforge

DEVELOPER  
ASC

RELEASE DATE  
Q3 1999

ORIGIN  
U.S.

# SANITY

Can Monolith's new action/adventure/strategy/role-playing game deliver all that?



The game's environments are certainly not lacking in variety — most are pretty bizarre

**H**ave you ever seen the movie *Scanners*?" asks Aaron St. John, lead designer for Monolith's upcoming *Sanity*. He's obviously excited, grinning from ear to ear as an early version of the game wavers to life on the monitor behind him. "That'd be a good start. *Sanity* takes place in a world like that, where certain people have these sort of psionic, psychic, abilities. It's kind of like having superhero powers, but using them drives you slowly insane. Nobody's really sure why they developed, but these people are eventually going to go crazy. Somebody's got to keep an eye on them."

That somebody, of course, is you. As Cain, an agent of the DNPC (Department of National Psionics Control), your job is to hunt down rogue psionics and neutralize them, protecting the normal human population from their crazed rampages. Unfortunately although Cain is one of the DNPC's most effective agents, he's also their biggest liability — his own pyrokinetic

powers recently leveled a crowded shopping mall. With dozens of innocent deaths on his record, you might say he's on serious probation. But St. John says that's the least of Cain's troubles.

"The main character has two attributes, health and sanity. Health is

**If your sanity meter gets extremely low, you have less control over your character. And if you drain it completely? His head explodes**

obviously the measure of your physical condition. Sanity is, well, the amount of sanity you have left before you go insane." Unfortunately, using any form of psionic power will make that sanity meter go down. If it gets extremely low, you'll have less control of your character. And if you drain it completely? His head explodes. Rough life.

Although *Sanity* employs Monolith's proprietary Lithtech engine, the game bears



FORMAT  
PC

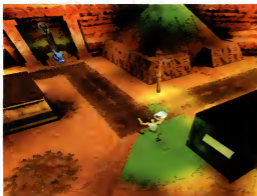
PUBLISHER  
Monolith

DEVELOPER  
Monolith

RELEASE DATE  
Holiday season 1999

ORIGIN  
U.S.

Cain's psychic powers come in handy (and it's tough not to notice the way they trigger all kinds of cool special effects), but using them too many times or too often can result in some nasty problems for the Intrepid hero



Card shark's playgrounds or Egyptian-themed trailer parks — those psychics could be anywhere




little resemblance to its siblings, *Blood 2* or *Shogo*. Yes, the 3D landscapes are surreal and beautifully rendered, and the action is fast and furious, but that's where the familial likeness ends. The first-person viewpoint is conspicuously missing — if anything, *Sanity's* perspective owes more to *Diablo* than to *Duke Nukem*. The action will be directed almost exclusively from overhead. This facilitates the game's unique style of combat, where psionics and their minions will battle it out in realtime with the intrepid Agent Cain.

Here's how it's supposed to work: Each psionic has a certain style of power, depending on his or her personal belief structure. The Psychic Hotline Queen's, for example, is very Egyptian, with talents ranging from a blazing sunstrike to a deadly mummy summoning. Each style offers several attack and defense skills in a range of intensities. The more powerful the desired effect, the more sanity it drains, and the longer it takes to "cast." The game's strategic element lies in knowing how and when to counter an enemy's attack, when to launch a pre-emptive strike to break their concentration, and when to conserve your limited sanity and just take a health-sapping hit or two.

In this respect, *Sanity* should resemble a realtime match of *Magic: the Gathering*. As you battle your way through each psionic's domain, you'll pick up some of his or her powers. These are added to your own psychic arsenal and can be used in future combat. As an added boost to the single-player experience, any skills you unlock while playing offline will also be available in

multiplayer mode. So the further you've gone in the single-player version, the more powerful you'll be in deathmatch.

Let's you get the unwanted idea that *Sanity* will be "solely" an action/strategy title, *Monolith* also stresses the game's twisting, conspiracy-ridden storyline and extensive adventure elements. NPCs can be wheedled, threatened, or bullied into providing helpful information and power-ups, and you never know when flashing your DNPC badge might open a door or score you a new friend.

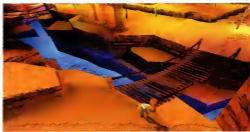
And as genre-blending is the growing trend, *Monolith* CEO Jason Hall is completely comfortable with the fact that the game doesn't fall snugly into a singular genre. "Was *Diablo* an RPG?" Hall asks. "Because if *Diablo* was an RPG, so is *Sanity*. You collect things and improve your character. But it also has lots of action and adventure. And strategy." By the books of things, he's right. But he won't venture to guess its eventual classification. "If you come up with a single word to describe this game," he says, "let us know." 



Get used to the engine, since cut scenes are all in-game scripted sequences



The game uses *Monolith's* own *Lithtech* engine, so the designers know it well



Much like *Diablo*, most of *Sanity's* action will be directed from above

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# MILESTONES

Next Generation's monthly update on tomorrow's games

**A**s the weather turns from "fine" to "damn fine" this July, even you hardest of hardcore gamers can't help feeling a little guilty ignoring the outdoors. **Next Generation** magazine

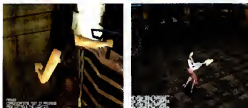
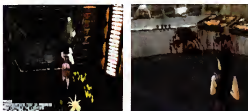
can help ease the pain. Try perusing this fine selection of games in development (including the latest pics of *Gran Turismo 2* in the back yard. Sorry, sunblock and chaise lounge not included.

## GRAN TURISMO 2 PSX

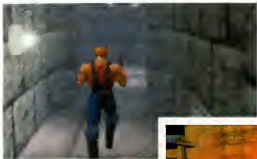


Further distinguishing itself from other racers, GT2 will feature upward of 400 cars — no Ferraris or Porsches, though. It includes a drag-racing mode and 20 circuits that stretch from California to Rome to Tahiti!

## ALIEN RESURRECTION PSX



Argonaut has unprecedented access to materials for this better-late-than-never movie license; the game should capture the film's dark feel

DUKE NUKEM ZERO HOUR <sup>N64</sup>

Duke exploits the Expansion Pak with hi-res graphics, more animations, and explosions. The level design nicely blends action and adventure

JURASSIC PARK: WARPATH <sup>PC</sup>

Can Black Ops and DreamWorks recapture the fun of *Primal Rage* with this new dino-fighter set in Jurassic Park? Publisher EA hopes so

**HIRED GUNS** PC

Previewed in NG 49, *Hired Guns* just keeps getting better looking. The game utilizes the Unreal engine for four player squad based gameplay

**DESCENT III** PC

These shots fail to convey the fluid transitions between *Descent III*'s two 3D engines, one for indoor and one for outdoor environments

**WIPEOUT 3** PSX

*Wipeout 3*'s tracks are all based in the same city. The game runs in hi-res, and each team's ships leave a uniquely colored vapor trail

**SLED STORM** PSX

EA Canada continues to lead the company's console development; *Sled Storm*'s snowmobiles handle exactly like the real thing

## NASCAR 2000



The N64 version adds the new Homestead track and rookie Dale Earnhardt Jr.

## KYOKUSHINE KUNGFU



No crazy Tekken-style moves here; Bandai's PSX game simulates kung fu

## ONI



Bungie's next PC title will attempt both gameplay and head-to-head combat

## ROAD RASH 64



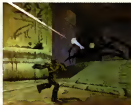
It may not be the prettiest N64 game, but the multi-player gameplay is there

## EAGLE ONE PSX



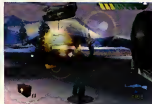
When the Hewelian islands are overrun by terrorists, your lone Herrier Jet is called in. Gless Ghost's Eagle One mixes flight-sim physics with arcade action

## ARMORINES N64



Take the "giant bugs" of Starship Troopers, add the Turok engine plus co-op mode, and you have Probe's next game

## TOMORROW NEVER DIES PSX



In development for almost two years, Black Ops' Bond is more akin to Syphon Filter than GoldenEye. We expect it to be equally popular

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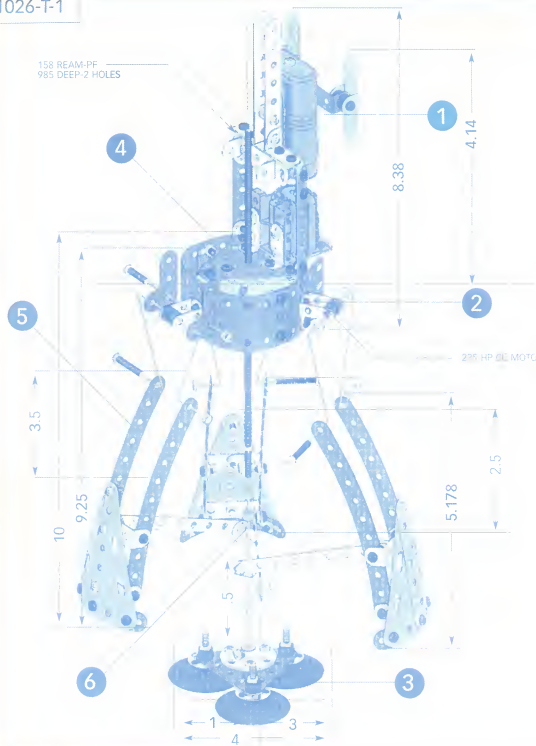
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5	SCO HD-SCR	178-20.5	2
6	VR-LOCK	1.5-20.5	2

Face it, game hardware is getting very complicated, and soon, only the big developers may have the resources to handle production. How can the little guys survive? By shopping around for components, then putting the whole project together.

## BUILDING THE FUTURE

**F**inally, the dust is beginning to settle. It's been a couple of months since Sony announced just how powerful its next-generation PlayStation is going to be, and the euphoria in the game-development community is dying down. That initial sense of wonderment and expectation brought on by this awesome new piece of hardware is giving way to one or two more realistic concerns.

According to its specs, PlayStation 2 should be able to render realtime scenes close to the quality of *Toy Story*, and with a built-in DVD drive it will be able to deliver games containing 4.7Gb of game data. Remember, though, *Toy Story* employed 20 people working for two years on its animations alone (the recent *A Bug's Life* employed 40 animators), and that was just for a two-hour non-interactive movie. Today's game developers commonly rely on teams of 12 or 15 people who spend 18 months to two years doing all the work on a single contemporary game for CD-ROM. Questions are naturally being raised as to how developers will cope with producing seven times the amount of data at four or five times the level of detail, packaged into 40 or 50 hours of gameplay, all within a similar timeframe.

Not unexpectedly, some industry pundits speculate that only the biggest developers and publishers will survive. It's simple technological determinism, they say. The new console demands huge teams to create its games, so the large companies who want to make money by publishing games for it will assemble big teams. Small developers' products simply won't be able to compete with giant studios run by the likes of EA, Eidos, Square, Acclaim et al, and will therefore be bought up or go bust. It's the continuation of a trend which has seen a move from games written by a single programmer (Karateka) to titles put together by small teams (*Doom*, *Tomb Raider*), and on to epics created by massive development studios (*Final Fantasy VII*, *Zelda*, *Shenmue*).

5.178

## THE ENGINE ROOM

Although game developers are usually reluctant to license blocks of code for their games, 3D engines are so time consuming to develop that licensing one can be done with impunity. Recently, there have been a slew of well-executed games for PC based on the Quake II engine, including *Heretic II*, *SiN*, and the inspiring *Half-Life*. These are to be followed by titles utilizing Epic's *Unreal* engine, including *Duke Nukem Forever*, *Wheel of Time*, and *Deus Ex*.

Once Epic has sold the *Unreal* engine to a developer, it's up to that developer how much it involves Epic in the production of the game, explains Vice President Mark Rein. "We don't get to see our licensees' work very often," he says. "In some cases, we never see them until the public sees them. We encourage licensees to come over to our offices in Raleigh, North Carolina, and trot them by our development team, but it seldom happens, and they're certainly not required to do so. We're often more likely to see a licensee's game on a stand at a trade show than we are to get an in-depth going over."

While Criterion's *Renderware* has been confirmed by Sony to be a 3D renderer for PlayStation 2, the next two big engines for PC are likely to come from id's Quake II: *Arena* and Epic's *Unreal Tournament*.



Whereas games like *Sentinel* (top left) were written by a single programmer, *Doom* (above) and *Tomb Raider* (left) were put together by teams. The prospect of developing titles for PlayStation 2 is therefore staggering.

## Fear and loathing

While such fears have their foundations — there are numerous examples of big publishers snapping up small development houses for a song — they are over-exaggerated. To begin with, worries about how the growing capabilities of hardware will strain and overstretch developers are nothing new. Although the PC isn't currently able to pump polygons at the same rate as the forthcoming PlayStation 2, as a platform it has used DVD technology for a while and developers are beginning to grapple with ways to fill the enormous space it offers. The same is also true of Dreamcast, with its high-capacity GD drive.

## The modular approach

For small- to medium-sized developers, the answer to this and many other problems could simply be more outsourcing. Already a crop of companies is emerging to support game developers as the hardware they work with brings greater demands and the expectations of the gaming audience grow. It's perfectly possible for today's small game-development team to buy a physics engine, a 3D rendering

The latest batch of graphics cards on the PC are capable of displaying textures up to an incredible 2,048x2,048 pixels (Quake II's are 256x256), meaning a real boost in the demand for hi-res artwork. This may leave some game designers spooked, as they'll no longer be able to get away with splashing the same small selection of textures over background polygons, nor can they rely on filtering or map-maps to blur over-used textures beyond recognition. To create a true sense of realism, scenes now require original artwork for most of their surfaces — and artwork takes valuable time and a good deal of manpower.

engine, and some AI, license some wireframes and textures, hire a musician to do the tunes, and buy a sample CD for the sound effects. The main tasks of the game-development team would then be to concentrate on getting the disparate technologies and artistic styles to work together and to produce the gameplay. This modular kind of approach to game development could prove very interesting and exciting, and some in the industry think it may even result in better games.

Probably the best-known cases of technology licensing between game developers are seen in the area of 3D engines for PC titles. Raven Software licensed the *Doom* engine from id as the basis for *Heretic* and *Hexen*. More recently, the Quake II engine has been used in *SiN* as well as *Half-Life*. Epic's *Unreal* engine, meanwhile, is set to return in approximately 10 upcoming games from various publishers.

With the number of mediocre Quake clones that have been kicking around, some view the licensing of 3D engines with skepticism. After all, they say, it might stifle originality and lead to cynically produced games, all with the same look and feel.

Epic's Vice President Mark Rein, however, is upbeat about the prospects for companies that license 3D engines. "Engines are just a set of paints, and game developers are painters," he



Like *Zeld* (left), *Shenmue* (above) is employing a huge team of artists, programmers, and designers. With modular methods of game creation, this needn't always be the case

explains. "It's what they do with the paint that determines the outcome. You can always copy someone else's look and style, or you can do something original. I'll skip examples of where it's happened and point to *Half-Life* and *Quake II* as the shining example of how it can be gloriously overcome. Every 3D game uses pixels and polygons. It's what you do with the pixels and polys that makes your game unique."

Indeed, the homogeneity of many of the 3D titles based on licensed engines could be ascribed to a lack of originality on the part of the licensee rather than a general failure of the concept. The Oxford, England-based company Mathengine (which has offices in Madras,

Mathengine's bosses hope to see their company's logo on the boxes of some of the top game releases.

It's an enormous ambition, but Mathengine's marketing manager Paul Topping is certain that the company's physics will help improve game development. Licensing the various elements that make up a product will not only help designers concentrate more on the game, but Topping is confident that it means they will be able to release titles more quickly. It's a trend he refers to as rapid application development, or RAD.

"You can buy your meshes from Viewpoint Datalabs, you can buy texture CDs, you can buy

**"You can copy someone else's style, or you can do something original. Every 3D game uses pixels and polygons. It's what you do with the pixels and polys that makes your game unique."**

Mark Rein, Epic

Montreal, and Tokyo) is another player that sees a big future for modular forms of game development. Having programmed a toolkit for writing advanced-physics models, and with absolutely no intention of developing games itself, Mathengine is geared up to supply code and support to game developers who would rather spend 18 months looking at gameplay than writing new physics engines every time they develop a game. It's a market niche shrewdly identified by Mathengine — game designers and players alike often point to the lack of solidity and realistic physical behavior in the otherwise astounding 3D worlds of today's games.

The company's software-development kit has been taken on by Sony as part of the middleware suite for PlayStation 2 developers, making Mathengine's physics model available to anyone wishing to use it for a nominal license fee. PC developers are also being encouraged to try it out, and by the millennium

CDs of explosions, you can buy rendering engines, you can buy AI engines," he enthuses. "Many game developers feel that they can beat the technology of these engines, and many can get close, but they end up concentrating really hard on the technology and not the gameplay.

"It's probably evident in many games at the moment," he continues. "By using external technology, you can put the gameplay back. You can concentrate on artwork; how it looks; how it feels; whether it's fun to play. And games can come out faster."



## Not invented here

The reluctance of developers to license technologies rather than invent and re-invent them in-house is something the industry will most likely need to overcome if some of the smaller game developers are to survive in the

## PHYSICS: WEIGHT AND SEE

While 3D engines have improved tremendously over the past three or four years, physics is something developers have tended to struggle with, to the irritation of many gamers. Enter Oxford, England-based Mathengine, a company aiming to sell its physics technology to game developers around the world. **Next Generation** was recently shown some startlingly realistic simulations of real-world physics, including wave and wake effects for water-based games; bubbles, balloons, and bouncing balls; the tumbling of walls and buildings when struck by wrecking balls; car and aircraft collisions, and centrifugal forces on bike, motorcycle, and unicycle wheels. "Almost every type of game can use us as a fundamental part of their dynamics or to provide special effects on top," says Marketing Manager Paul Topping. Mathengine's development software has been taken on by Sony to provide PlayStation 2 developers with a powerful basis for the physics in their games.



Mathengine's Paul Topping believes gameplay will improve if developers adopt his company's system for modeling physics



The technology stretches bouncy and deformable objects using wireframe models that can change in size and complexity

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: THINK AGAIN

Thus far there has been little licensing of artificial-intelligence technologies between developers. AI is seen as part of the rules in any computer game, and is thus rightly taken to be a core area of expertise in game production — fundamental to the originality of any title. However, can licensed AI be ruled out in the future?

Probably not. Animation Science's Rampage technology has already been signed up under Sony's middleware program for the next-generation PlayStation. Though not a general AI system, Rampage can be used to govern the conscious and instinctive behavior of individual characters when they're in crowds. Depending on how well the "bots" (AI combat entities) in games like *Quake II* and *Unreal Tournament* turn out to be, there is the real prospect that these too may be licensed to other developers. Cyberlife has not ruled out the possibility of selling its neural-net-based AI, either.

"There are certainly others out there acting as AI consultants with technologies," says Cyberlife Creative Director Toby Simpson. "But I'm not aware of anyone licensing a complete AI solution for entertainment software as yet. Part of the problem is that everyone's AI is as different, as everyone's engines differ. Finding a common, complete AI solution with so many different approaches would be exceptionally difficult. It is practical, though, to deal in partial solutions such as navigation systems and agent-scripting languages."

Taken to its logical extreme, it's possible that one day companies will develop AI for individual game characters or creatures to order: *Okay, so you want code for some eight-foot-tall, bipedal/carnivorous birds with aggressive territorial instincts when near their nests, whose primary aim in life is to kill human beings, tear the flesh from their bodies, and then feed it to their chicks? We also have a special offer on swarms of flying lizards that display bat-like behavior, feed on roadstools, and are non-aggressive, unless provoked, except in warm weather or during their mating season.*



**Quake II's engine [left] is put to good use in Half-Life [center]. The Unreal Tournament [right] engine could also prove popular this year**

era of Dreamcast, PlayStation 2, and Dolphin, as well as tomorrow's super-PCs. "Programmers are an arrogant breed," comments Jez San, head of veteran British developer Argonaut. "They like to rewrite stuff even if it doesn't need rewriting. Every new programmer wants to write their own new 3D engine just because they think it's going to go 0.2 percent faster than someone else's. It's a fact of game-development life — programmers like to show off the size of their 3D engines. Still, sometimes, they are actually better than the ones they replace."

**"Sony is encouraging anyone that has a good tool or technology for any part of game development to market it so that the whole PSX2 development community can benefit"**

*Andy Beveridge, SN Systems*

The same problem is identified by Andy Beveridge of SN Systems, which, like Mathengine, is working on development tools for Sony's middleware program. "One solution is to do what some of the smaller movie-production companies do — to rent facilities that you don't have yourself," he notes. "This is something that the game-development community has traditionally been quite afraid of. Most software developers want to use their own code — it's often a matter of pride that a tech-led developer can do a better job of the

3D engine or physics model for their game than to license it. This places a lot of focus and value on technology and the result is that everyone wastes time reinventing the wheel and we get games with fancy-looking graphics but poor content. This is starting to change, though — look at games with licensed engines now. Half-Life on the PC is an excellent example."

Beveridge's company, SN Systems, is producing various middleware tools including a DVD-ROM emulator that will enable PlayStation 2 developers to monitor the likely performance

of the machine's DVD drive long before they even have working hardware to test their games on. As an insider on the middleware program, he believes Sony's new system will make a broader range of support available to game developers. Though developers may be worried about how they're going to put 20 million polygons onto the screen every second, or how they're going to fill DVD discs, Sony is making moves to encourage the sharing of technologies through the middleware program. "There was always a limited range of tools

6 178

15% PEAK-IF  
58% UCLP 2 HULLS

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## MESH-MASH OF ARTWORK

3D modeling can be one of the most time-consuming tasks in game development, which is why many 3D artists turn to mesh and texture libraries. The best-known resource in this field has to be Viewpoint DataLabs, and the company must have been reaching its hands together since the announcement of PlayStation 2.

While Viewpoint is often used by developers to supply wireframe meshes for use in cut-scene animations, the increasing power of PCs and the coming of PSX2 could see the models taken on for in-game graphics as well. Viewpoint offers a library of 15,000 pre-built meshes and a new model bank with 1,200 textured models — each at four levels of detail. Specialized

services include previsualization, laser scanning, NURBS modeling, texture mapping, and inverse-kinematic skeleton design.

"You have to look at what makes a game sell," says Daphne Rowan of Viewpoint. "It is game design and gameplay. Everything else is just fancy decoration. The result: many developers are focusing on gameplay and are consciously avoiding 'reinventing the wheel,' which creates a market for suppliers of models, textures, music, and even pieces of software code. The modular approach you are seeing is just the fact that game companies are focusing on the basics of what makes a game sell and outsourcing all the rest."

3.178

2.178

available for N64 development or Sega Saturn development, both in programmers' tools and artists' tools," says Beveridge. Sony has always made an effort to distribute tools and libraries, but Beveridge explains that "what is new is that Sony has extended this way beyond the programmers' tools. They're setting up a program to encourage anyone that has a good tool or technology for any part of the game-development cycle to market it so that the whole PSX2 development community can benefit."

4

## Development D.I.Y

It's not only pride or arrogance that will cause game developers to swerve away from the middleware tools and programming kits produced by the likes of Mathengine. Game developers who can afford it are taking a scientific approach to the problem of increasingly complex hardware. Argonaut is one of a number of companies that runs its own research-and-development department. This,



**Warzone 2100 (left) and Expendable (lower right) are just two games that have relied on Viewpoint DataLabs for models used in cut-scene animations. Viewpoint also specializes in car and aircraft models**

"Sure you can have 247 artists designing every nook and cranny of *Shenmue*, but where's the R&D? It's time to do something other than just more art!"

Jez San, Argonaut

As this sequence demonstrates, when Mathengine's physics are applied to a wall-like structure, the results could significantly enhance siege games, or simply lead to better-looking destruction scenes during action sequences



too, is probably a sign of the maturing of the game industry. Separate R&D is very common in other industries, and has a huge profile on the hardware side as well as in business software.

In entertainment software, however, much of the process of R&D has traditionally been part and parcel of the process of actual product



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## THAT BIG-SCREEN FEEL

While many developers pride themselves on the end-of-mission cut scenes they produce, the production of broadcast- or cinema-quality animations is an area where small developers can get a lot of external support. SoHo is filled with animation and FX houses, many of which are ready to lend their resources to the game industry.

Digital Arts Ltd. is one such company, and president Graham Brown-Martin is adamant that game developers should be looking to companies like his for high-end expertise. "The distinctions in presentation between feature films and gaming will continue to blur and thus the user expectation will increase," he says. "There will always be the need for highly engaging gameplay, which is surely the key skill of any developer, but I believe the market will expect a much higher quality of presentation — on a par with the best of film and TV."

For Brown-Martin, whose company produced animations and effects for *Lost in Space* and *Contact*, the cost of spooling up development houses to produce similar effects for games is silly, particularly when there are dedicated studios ready to do the work. "Small developers are already outsourcing some of their production, particularly graphic design, animation, live action, and FX, while keeping the core skills in-house. Those that don't, face a difficult future. How happens if they produce a game that bombs in the market? How do they continue to support a massive investment in equipment and talent until they hopefully get it right next time. I can't say they won't survive, but they may have trouble sleeping at night," he says.



Digital Arts Ltd. produced these animations for *Future Sound of London* (top) and *DaClick* (bottom). The company is eager to offer its services to game developers for both in-game and cut-scene animations

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development. A typical scenario is for game developers to invest at least some time in R&D before starting a new project, then perform the rest as they go along.

At Argonaut, however, technologies are developed that then facilitate game development. San doesn't think he needs Mathew's physics models because his lab has developed their own. Equally, he probably won't be seeing the need to use Renderware — developed by Criterion and accepted by Sony as the middleware 3D engine for PlayStation 2. Nor is San likely to be going with Microsoft's Direct3D for Dreamcast or PC titles. He's pulling no punches. "We have the coolest physics, the most photorealistic renderer, the largest fractal 3D planet compression, and some other R&D going on," he claims.

Argonaut has licensed out its Brender 3D engine to other game developers in the past, and there's no reason why the company's physics model shouldn't give Mathew some competition. By the same token, San wouldn't rule out taking on someone else's technology if it was better than anything Argonaut could produce. However, looking around at some of the bigger game-development studios, he is puzzled by the lack of initiative on the R&D front: "With the Dreamcast and PlayStation 2, the strategy for most companies, particularly the Japanese publishers announced so far, has been to throw more polygons at the problem. None of them seem to want to try and shift the paradigm. None of them are experimenting with new physics or new rendering technologies. Tekken 4 will just be Tekken 3 with more characters, using more polygons. *Final Fantasy X* will just be *Final Fantasy IX* with more polygons. Haven't these guys got any imagination? Sure, you can have 247 artists designing every nook and cranny of Shenmue, but where's the R&D? Where are you going with this? Are you just throwing more polygons at the problem? It's time to do something other than just more art!"

5

## In-house, art house, out-of-house

Ironically, art is something some game developers feel the least comfortable producing in-house. They might be able to scrape by writing original code for their 3D engines, physics, and artificial-intelligence models, but unlike the big Japanese studios, they haven't got the manpower to handle all the artwork. For most, it seems that even though they'll shun modular methods of game development and focus on developing their own technology and gameplay, outsourcing a game's artwork isn't nearly such a bitter pill to swallow.

The *Wipeout* team famously bought graphics from The Designers Republic when the original PlayStation first appeared, and on a more mundane note, designers can now buy CDs full of architectural textures to use. Viewpoint Datalabs considers the game industry to be an increasingly important source of buyers for its accurately modeled 3D meshes and other production services. Rage Software's action title *Expensible* might use some fantastic lighting effects and a 3D engine developed in-house, but its rendered sequences rely heavily on viewpoint models, as do the rendered

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sequences in *Civilization: Call to Power*.

Pre-rendered cut scenes may seem superfluous add-ons to many programmers, but the use of Viewpoint models has already moved beyond fluff, and there's widespread use of the wireframes within games such as Microsoft's *Combat Flight Sim* and EA's impressive range of Jene's air-combat titles. GT's *Driver* will use Viewpoint models, and so will the upcoming *Interstate '82* from Activision. After all, there's hardly any point in employing an artist to model an Apache aircraft or a Lamborghini to perfection when Viewpoint has already done all the hard work and is ready and willing to sell the finished product.

6



## More focus on gameplay

But is a modular approach to game development the ideal way forward? Can Sony's middleware program allay developers' fears about being swallowed by big publishers? And will adoption of this paradigm truly result in better games for consumers?

Well, if these ideas give the smaller developer a chance to use highly detailed artwork or a cutting-edge 3D engine or physics model without investing too much money or

*Civilization: Call to Power* (top), *Expendable* (center), and *Driver* (above) are three very different titles that each make use of Viewpoint Datalabs' 3D models

rapid change, a pragmatic approach is called for. Those with the skill and originality to develop what they have to, and the humility to look for help when they need it, are the ones who'll survive and prosper.

On the edge of this new frontier presented by Dreamcast, PlayStation 2, Dolphin, and the ever-evolving PC, the worst thing that can

**Those with the skill and originality to develop what they have to, and the humility to look for help when they need it, are the ones who'll survive and prosper**

happen is for anyone to go along with the pessimists who believe that conglomerates will swallow all. There's no need for small developers to throw up their hands and put up the "for sale" signs. With support from outside sources, they'll still be able to make great games. Many would agree that it's vital they stay around to inject a spark of ingenuity and originality into proceedings while the accountants inside the major publishers look at ways of realizing more sequels. All that's needed is the willingness to adapt to this exciting new environment.

As any developer will tell you, they'd love to be able to do everything in-house, and to have as much time as they want to do it, too. But in an industry more prone than most to bouts of

happen is for anyone to go along with the pessimists who believe that conglomerates will swallow all. There's no need for small developers to throw up their hands and put up the "for sale" signs. With support from outside sources, they'll still be able to make great games. Many would agree that it's vital they stay around to inject a spark of ingenuity and originality into proceedings while the accountants inside the major publishers look at ways of realizing more sequels. All that's needed is the willingness to adapt to this exciting new environment.

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# Great Fighters

The complete fighting game you've been waiting for is here, Fighter Maker. Finally you can have everything you've ever wanted in a fighting game—hard-hitting one or two player 3D action, an incredible arsenal of more than 800 moves, AND professional-quality design tools that let YOU create YOUR perfect fighter. If you've got every fighting move and combo down cold, start inventing your own! Fighter

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— Next Generation

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*"...the most thorough editor we've seen in a console product..."*

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camera angle, button setup, sound and visual effect.

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tune your fighter's moves and  
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Design your personal victory pose.

**Save to a memory  
card and Kick Ass!**

As the game industry nears another generational shift, **Next Generation** goes to the one company that has been on top since the beginning to get a report from Senior VP and Chief Creative Officer Bing Gordon on the...

# State of the Arts



**B**ling Gordon has been with Electronic Arts since the beginning, September 20, 1982. As the man in charge of the games at the world's largest entertainment-software publisher, he's seen it all — from the early hits like *Sky Fox* and *One-on-One* to the breakthrough sports titles on Genesis to EA's current run of five-star 3Dfx-enhanced hockey masterpieces on PC. We caught up with Bling in his new office (he's had a cube for the past 17 years) at EA's campus in Redwood City, Calif., to discuss hardware, sports, and the difficulty of innovating in a large company.

## Hardware

**Next Generation:** A few months ago, at an EA open house, you said that if Sega had gone with a 3Dfx-based technology solution for Dreamcast, rather than an NEC one, you thought EA would have been "vocally behind the product." Instead, EA's silence about Dreamcast has been deafening. Why?

**Bling Gordon:** EA is a strong believer in the technical excellence of 3Dfx offerings and in their drive to bring "virtual reality" to PC gaming, and we have been a strategic endorser of their business. We had a strong early commitment to 3Dfx-enhanced games, and many of our technologists are at the leading edge of 3Dfx skills. If Dreamcast would have used 3Dfx, we would have had a competitive edge technologically, as well as a strategic reason to provide broader support to 3Dfx. By comparison, none of our engineers had experience with the NEC chipset, nor with the Hitachi processor, so we are faced with starting from scratch.

**NG:** So what do you think of Dreamcast's chances?

**Bling:** Well, we haven't made an announcement about Dreamcast one way or another. And typically, with all the other hardware platforms, we announce at the show prior to the U.S. launch.

**NG:** You've already announced support for PlayStation 2.

**Bling:** PlayStation 2 is the first exception to that. Well, I guess 3DO was an exception, too, but the PlayStation 2 is the first independent exception. On Sega with Dreamcast, though, I'd say they have challenges. The first is to launch the console, which these days, I think, takes about a half a billion dollars in cash, minimum, to engineer it and then to market it and to make some software. And it may be quickly adding to a billion dollars. So a company needs a billion-dollar war chest to enter the market. They also need a good beachhead. We watch what goes on in Japan a lot. Dreamcast, I think, has not met Sega's own expectations in Japan. And I think in any console generation, there can only be two winners. There is just not room for three. So Sega's going to try to get an advantage by being first out. I think Sega's U.S. management has been focused and scrappy, and that's always a plus. I also really admire the initial batch of products on Dreamcast. So they've got scrappy management in the U.S., and they've got a great initial batch of products. That being said, they've got an uphill battle. I think they spent their brand goodwill multiple times with the 32X and the Sega CD, then the

Saturn, to a point where I think it's going to be hard, even for people that consider themselves Sega loyalists, to think that anything from Sega right now is a must-have. Whereas, Sony hasn't misstepped yet. And Nintendo has shown that you can do a couple things wrong but still succeed. But Sega has misstepped more times than Sony or Nintendo over the last four or five years.

**NG:** Do you think Dreamcast can succeed, long-term, if EA doesn't support it?

**Bling:** No.

**NG:** And you've got no plans right now to support it.

**Bling:** No announcements so far this quarter. And I think if we show up at E3 without any Dreamcast products... You know, with or without an announcement, you know that's probably news, either way. **[Update: At E3, EA did not announce plans to support Dreamcast.]**

**NG:** What do you think of PlayStation 2?

**Bling:** Well, I take all new hardware presentations with a grain of salt. But Sony, as a company, is enormously

## If Dreamcast had used 3Dfx, we would have had a competitive edge technologically, as well as a strategic reason to provide broader support to 3Dfx

impressive. We have a pretty high regard for how Sony's been able to take their consumer franchise and transfer it over to PlayStation. They would argue it's skills, not branding. But I think a lot of it's branding. And, you know, there are just a ton of people interested in quality who've grown up with Sony as their consumer-electronics manufacturer and they just expect more from Sony. Every other hardware company when they say we're going to deliver such-and-such at such-and-such a price point and such-and-such a time frame, has turned out to have had to compromise their initial strategies. Sony hasn't. You know, when Sony has tried to pour on the coals in manufacturing and marketing, they've done it pretty successfully. So I think a competent product from Sony will have a bigger market impact than a competent product from any other current hardware company. And the PlayStation 2 created a lot of excitement in the development community, not just EA, but throughout all the development community, because of the ambitiousness of their intent. And we're pretty excited about it.

**NG:** With PCs getting more powerful, how much time does





the console world have left, even with the power of next-generation systems like PlayStation 2?

**Bing:** I've never been one who thought the PC was going to monopolize home interactive entertainment. I think the PC is somewhere between twenty and forty percent. It's stable for some time to come. A PC right now, even a cheap PC, costs a thousand bucks. It's a solo, one-person-per-machine device, and you play it from three feet away. And trying to make PCs stand for something other than that is extremely risky. And sixty-six percent of our console owners in the US claim they own PCs. I think we're entering a time period where there's a huge amount of cross-ownership and people are making clear decisions about which kind of games to play on which platform. So, first-person shooters, people play on PCs. Flight sims, people play on PCs. Turn-based RPGs, people play on PCs. Realtime strategy, people play on PCs. Character action, people play on console. Sports, people play on console.

Action RPGs, people play on console. You just see almost zero examples of a leading title in any one of those categories being a top-twenty product on console and PC, even as the hardware gets more similar. And, you know, the categories of sports and arcade and character action are bigger categories than the other ones. As big as Doom and Quake are, they're not as big as Mario and Zelda. And I don't think they're going to be.

### EA Sports

**NG:** EA built its empire on the strength of its sports dominance. But if there's one complaint about EA's sports titles, it's that the level of innovation in them is never quite up to the level of some of your competitors. It's tough to innovate when you're on top and you've got to deliver a new product every 12 months?

**Bing:** Well, yes. Actually, it's the volume of success that's the

problem. You know, it's hard to throw away success. Say we bring out a new version of *Hockey*, or *Madden*, ditch some features from the previous year, and replace them with something new. Almost every time we do that, we get more negative feedback than positive feedback. So what the loyal customers would like is everything from last year plus a bunch of new stuff. And trying to do that drives you crazy—it's just about physically impossible. And so we have to make choices about throwing some stuff away. But I guess that's both a strength and a weakness. In general, annual upgrades just don't work for software. It works for the sports franchises because the data's new every year. But you can't build a new product every year. And when we try to do something that's really different, it's at a risk. So in sports,

you rarely see an all-new engine from somebody who's currently having success. You usually see it from somebody who's had success but is on the outs or is coming from nowhere. We've had a couple of exceptions to that, but because of the demands of your legacy loyalists, if you have something good going, it's really hard to find a new way to do things. I think we're getting a little smarter about how to innovate. But even so, taking away stuff once you've created it is pretty hard.

**NG:** How important are looks versus gameplay to EA?

**Bing:** The John Madden Football we brought onto 3D0—none of us here liked it very much, so we were shocked to find that a bunch of Madden loyalists would come in, and at the time, they liked it better than any other football game. What was the big deal? It had some "ficks" in it. But, you know, the motion capture was really hard to control. Guys looked like they floated over the grass. And it just drove us crazy. It was the best we could do at the time, and we judged it to be just barely good enough, but we were blown away at how much people liked it. And the flip side of that was the year on PlayStation when *Game Day* went polygonal and we were still sprites. We really admired that game we built. It was the first time in a football game you could see holes open, running, and that you had to actually bring the defensive backfield as a quarterback and lead patterns. And we thought that was really cool. But we got beat in the market by a couple of graphic effects. I think we consistently focus more on the gameplay than on the actual presentation. And the only exception to that is FIFA—when in doubt, innovate on graphics instead of on the underlying engine. And they've got some market reward for that, and also at times have suffered for it.

**NG:** Is EA Sports invincible? Are you so entrenched that you could go three seasons with an inferior game and still be on top in a category?

**Bing:** I think that sports games are primarily social. You almost have to have the same sports game your friends do on an annual basis, and maybe even on a machine basis. You know, once you decide to buy a PlayStation instead of a Saturn, you kind of all agree that when you come back to



problem. You know, it's hard to throw away success. Say we bring out a new version of *Hockey*, or *Madden*, ditch some features from the previous year, and replace them with something new. Almost every time we do that, we get more negative feedback than positive feedback. So what the loyal customers would like is everything from last year plus a bunch of new stuff. And trying to do that drives you crazy—it's just about physically impossible. And so we have to make choices about throwing some stuff away. But I guess that's both a strength and a weakness. In general, annual upgrades just don't work for software. It works for the sports franchises because the data's new every year. But you can't build a new product every year. And when we try to do something that's really different, it's at a risk. So in sports,



college in September, when the football season starts, which game you're going to get. And the person who buys the wrong machine or buys the wrong software is just SOL. So there's this bigger experience outside just the game. And I think once a group gets oriented around a particular title, it's just hard to get them off it. In PC golf, we've seen that with PGA and Tiger versus Links. There've been years where we were pretty certain, despite what reviewers said, that we had a twenty percent better game. But it's hard to pull people off. And there've been years where reviewers have said that some of our other sports games haven't been the best games in the category. But the reviewers at that time kind of failed to understand the social dynamics. I don't know how many years in a row we can go bringing out a product line where the reviewers recommend something else instead of our game. We've been able to do it about one year in a row. But we haven't had the experience of two years in a row — the guys tend to get a little more focused when they've gotten slumped around a particular year. But for EA, going from a fifty-plus share of sports to a number-three position in sports, I think that would require great failure on EA's part.

**NG:** In the past few years, everyone has tried their hands at sports — how many competitors can the market support?

**Bing:** There are some companies who just shouldn't try to compete in sports. I remember with Brian Fargo at Interplay, he told me, "Bing, we're getting into sports, don't take it personally." I said, "Brian, are you crazy? You're not personally interested in sports. And sports is demanding. But you have great insights in role playing. Maybe role-playing games aren't hot right now, but you ought to stick to role playing." I knew role playing was going to come back, anyway. He thought I was trying to hose him. And, you know, I was right, he was wrong. But there are companies who can't try to compete. But sports gamers have shown that in any given year they always are willing to buy two games in a sport. Not three, but two. And so any company that tries to claim they'll be number-three is going to get creamed. License costs are too high, and the cost of building a franchise is pretty high. But there ought to be two winning organizations for each sport. In hockey, it turns out there's only been one. But I think that's more due to a competitive failure than kind of a market necessity. Anyway,

is stupid, you know, make it harder."

**NG:** But can you provide simulative complexity while still making it easy to use for Dad or Grampa?

**Bing:** Porsche thinks you can. And I think you have to be able to. There's just no mass-market product categories where you can't. So, cars and movies have multiple levels of sophistication. I think we have to be able to. If there remains a product where the benefit is too hard for most people to use, it's just not going to be a leading product for long. Even Microsoft is finding that out.

## Innovation

**NG:** You mentioned the difficulty of innovating in sports. In a company as large as EA, the amount of corporate inertia must make innovating in any category different.

**Bing:** In any organization, there are a bunch of people who have succeeded at doing things in particular ways. And it's hard to get people to move to different ways. There're a couple different approaches to try to get people to try new things. One is to come up with a logical argument, and another is to show them a new prototype or experiment that this is a good idea. So for instance, when *Ultima Online* was first proposed, corporate EA said, "We don't understand this from a business point of view." And the Origin guys said, "Well, we really want to do this." So they said, "Okay, take a small batch of money and see what you come up with." And then about a third of the way through the product development, it started looking kind of cool. So then corporate got onto it and said, "You know, now we see what you're talking about. Why don't you pour on the coals some more?" And the budget went from \$250,000 to \$2.5 million. In general, with a bigger company like EA, there's an ongoing battle to make bigness a benefit rather than a negative. And I don't know exactly what



we probably expect with every sport that we're going to have a second competitor, a second strong competitor. And it might be that we've got a different second strong competitor on every platform.

**NG:** Making games easier to play certainly has been an EA goal over the past couple of products, but if you talk to a lot of former producers at EA, they think it's going too far — "EA wants one-button gameplay — you just push one button and the game just happens," was the comment one of them made recently.

**Bing:** That's that legacy issue again. But, you know, when you try to do something to expand the market, there's a danger that people who are already in the market say, "This



"corporate inertia" is, other than a bunch of people who've succeeded in a particular way, thinking that that's the way to future success. So when new things come, like the Internet, and to a lesser degree like new platforms, new game types, you know, we kind of have to make sure we've got enough experiments going on in some part of EA that other people can climb onto it and move ahead.

**NG:** But is it tough to get those experiments going? When you're a small company, betting the farm on every product, it's easy to say, "Let's bet the farm over here where no one is." But when you're EA, is it easy to just say, "Well, we're EA, we'll just keep doing what works?"

**Bing:** People ascribe to Electronic Arts a more monolithic organizational structure than we really have. There's limited ability to tell people what to do within Electronic Arts. And we've purposely set it up that way — we don't want development organizations that are what advertising agencies call "wizards," you know, creative people who have no spirit and who sit in the corner and do what they're told to do. In fact, we get kind of the opposite effect from what you describe: the overall organization, doing seventy products a year, can afford to do risky products, because Electronic Arts has the ability to get distribution on what they do. But individual groups tend to want to take less risk. So [Director of Corporate Communications] Pat [Becker] and I, for instance, kind of led the organization in saying we should

do an all-women's sports game. Maybe basketball, maybe soccer. It's time. The nineties are the decade of the emergence of women as full role models in sports. We should get on this. But we went around, and every single organization I came to said, "Well, yeah, that's an okay idea, EA should do that, maybe, but not with my career they don't!" It wasn't just the men in the organization, it was women, too. They all said, "Well, I gotta get a career going. Why would I spend a year to do that, it's not a very good market." And we were saying, "Shit, we've got a fifty-plus share of the sports market. We need to bring in new customers. We need to do some risk-taking and market-making things!" And nobody wanted to do it. Well, eventually we got around to it, and we put women's teams in March Madness. Some people started going, yeah, maybe that's an okay idea. So this is one example. Bottom line, a lot of times the people in Electronic Arts who want to do the high-risk things are people who are currently not succeeding. So it's an organizational struggle because often times the people who aren't succeeding aren't succeeding for a reason. And so the question is, how do you get the people who are most likely to succeed at something new to be willing to take the risk? It's an ongoing issue. I think the whole industry realized about four years ago that it was making too many products. And I'd say that over the past four years we started realizing that if we've got something new that's important, we need to put the best people on it, rather than people who don't have anything better to do.

**NG:** Do you think EA would be better off in the long run if it did a little more pushing of successful teams to take some time to work on experimental or risky projects? Or is it just inevitable that the successful teams won't want to take risks?

**Bing:** Geez, I think it is a historical worldwide trend for successful people to take fewer risks. That's why Japanese cars surprised Detroit in the early '70s, for example. There are plenty of big companies that have figured out how to lionize creative success. Fortune magazine compiles a list each year, with 3M always near the top, for example. EA is now big and stable enough that we can worry about building an organization strategy to promote internal risk-taking. Our goal is to become like 3M — not like GM.

NG



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cause a tidal wave among PC gamers.



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# GALLERY

The fine art of gaming



Silver's distinct gothic style belies its Japanese-influenced RPG content. Playing as the main character and expert swordsman David (pictured), the game borrows much from the *Final Fantasy* stable, which means that you are also able to take control of any of David's five companions, each of whom possesses different skills and weapons. The characters' anime-style shoulder-padded armor and gigantic blades seem impressive, but success ultimately depends upon the casting of spells, the effects of which are spectacularly dazzling.

Images rendered by artists **John Lomax** and **Matt Wood** at Warthog Ltd, using Softimage and Adobe Photoshop





Taking its inspiration from *Grawtar*, *Elite*, and *Doom*, *Psygnosis' Lander* is a futuristic, hybrid hovercraft adventure that attempts to wrap up action in a "hard sci-fi crispy coating." While one of your main aims is to earn a sack of cash with which you can purchase better lander crafts, your adventures will take you to a variety of detailed and well-realized planets.

A great deal of time has been spent improving the graphics engine (originally created for *Sentient*), and the team claims to be especially proud of the realtime lighting and shadow projection effects. The results are certainly impressive.

Images rendered by Psygnosis artist  
Carl Dalton using Softimage



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A fine racing game, a new approach to fighting games,  
and an oddity from the past gets a new look

# FINALS

We know the score

**N**ext Generation strives every month to bring you, our precious readers, the clearest, most unbiased, most professionally written game reviews in the known universe — or, at least on this planet.

★★★★★

#### Revolutionary

Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high watermark.

★★★★

#### Excellent

A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre or a successful attempt at creating a new one.

★★★

#### Good

A solid and competitive example of an established game style.

★★

#### Average

Perhaps competent — certainly uninspired.

★

#### Bad

Crucially flawed in design or application.

● Denotes a review of a Japanese product.



90



92



93



94



94



94



95



95



95



96



96

**90** **R4: Ridge Racer 4** PlayStation  
The best is still pretty good

**92** **Ehrgeiz** PlayStation  
Interesting, if not totally successful

**93** **Lunar: Silver Star** PlayStation  
A classic of sorts gets revamped

**3Xtreme** PlayStation **94**

**MLB 2000** PlayStation **94**

**Triple Play 2000** PlayStation **94**

**Bust A Move 2 (Japan)** PlayStation **95**

**Civilization: Call to Power** PC **95**

**Machines** PC **95**

**Recoll** PC **96**

**Warzone 2100** PC **96**

**Hydro Thunder** Arcade **96**

**Star Wars Episode I: Racer** Nintendo 64 **97**

**All Star Baseball 2000** Nintendo 64 **97**

**Monaco Grand Prix** Nintendo 64 **97**



Publisher: **Namco**  
Developer: **Namco**



Whether racing at dusk or in the dead of night, the tracks look gorgeous



Namco has made sure that its traditional symbols such as Pac-Man and Dig Dug are littered throughout the game. There is even a top-secret car that looks just like Pac-Man further in the game

Namco shows off its **vast technological expertise** with the **latest in its showcase series**

## RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

**A**fter four years, Namco's highly popular racing franchise has finally gotten the update we've all been waiting for. The Ridge Racer franchise has always been a staple of the Namco lineup, and to gamers it represents state-of-the-art technology, so with *R4*, Namco had a lot to prove.

And prove it Namco did, because graphically, *R4* is amazing. From the awesome style of the menus to the in-game graphics, *R4* is a class act. By using clever lighting effects and subtle colors, Namco has created a series of racing environments — and they are environments, not just tracks — that look as close to lifelike as anything on PlayStation so far. And by using perfectly timed and executed sound effects, the *R4* world is brought to life, further enhancing the feeling of "being there."

The game itself sports eight tracks and 321 non-licensed cars — an impressive roster indeed. The Grand Prix mode is where most of *R4*'s action takes place, with four different levels of gameplay: easy, medium, hard, and expert. You then have a choice of four different cars (that represent four different manufacturers), two of which are "gnp" cars and two of which are



Virtual star Reiko Nagase (a.k.a. "the Namco girl") has a stronger presence in this game than in any other Ridge Racer to date

"drift," each offering different styles of racing. Gameplay is still your standard Ridge Racer arcade driving, however, with large unrealistic slides and very high speeds, so fans of racing sims shouldn't get their hopes up that this is a whole new ballgame. While the different cars add to the depth of the experience, it's still nowhere near as accurate an experience as *Gran Turismo* — nor does it try to be.

The Grand Prix itself comprises eight different races on eight

different tracks. After the first two races you earn a new, faster car, assuming you qualify. Another car is given after the next three races, and yet another is awarded for the final race. Whenever a car is won, it becomes a permanent addition to your garage, and can be chosen for versus or time trial modes. Once a Grand Prix is completed, the "extra trial" mode is accessed, in which you can race your best car against a very fast special car, which, if beaten, is also added to your garage. This is the most challenging aspect of the game, and the prize cars are really cool, ranging from futuristic hovercraft to rocket cars to a super speed Pac-Man mobile (which has its own theme song.) All of the cars can be downloaded to PocketStation (if you are one of the few gamers in the U.S. to have one from Japan) and then traded with friends.

*R4* is very slick and great fun, but it deserves some criticism. The worst irritation is that no matter what manufacturer or difficulty level is selected for a Grand Prix, you always end up racing the same tracks in the same order.





The now-obligatory replay mode [above] shows off your latest race from a variety of perspectives



Enemy cars will swarva to block you and even ram you should you be so bold as to try and pass

Consequently, racing gets repetitive because you just keep doing the same thing over and over. The other bugbear is the extremely weak AI. It follows the same format as previous RR games: opponents are strung out around the track, and you simply have to overtake them all to win. You can virtually set your watch by the opposing cars. If you overtake, say, the fifth car on one corner, you know you're doing well. But if you overtake it on the following straight, you know you're lagging a bit. Some may enjoy this format of racing, but compared to the audio-visual advances, it seems very old-fashioned. Also, perhaps to enable gamers to collect cars faster, we found the racing itself a bit easier than Ridge Racer.

Ultimately, the amount of

repetition and the slightly old-fashioned AI keep this otherwise amazing graphic advance from the

**To gamers, this franchise represents state-of-the-art technology, so with R4, Namco had a lot to prove... and prove it Namco did**

absolute highest ranks.

Still, when it comes to the crunch, there's no doubt that R4 is the best arcade-style racer yet seen on PSX: it's fast, fun, and highly addictive. And the added bonus of a hi-res, 60fps version of the original Ridge Racer certainly gives the product an enormous amount of bang for the buck.

**RATING**



R4 has over three hundred variations of vehicles, each with its own unique speed and handling characteristics



It's the attention to the tiny graphical details that make the game so neat: witness the straggling of the brake lights in low light or the helicopters that swoop in low to cover the race

Fighting games could use a new idea or two, and Square and Dream Factory have a couple



## EHRGEIZ

Publisher: **EA Square**  
Developer: **Square  
Soft/Dream  
Factory**



Yup, it's a fighting game with an RPG-like quest mode — much like Dream Factory's *Tobal 2*



The last fighting game from Dream Factory was the splendidly unique *Tobal 2*, sequel to the unique but not-so-splendid *Tobal No. 1*. As excellent as the game was, the poor U.S. reception of the original meant *Tobal 2* went untranslated and unlocalized for the U.S. market. A pity!

That didn't deter the Dream Factory team, who went on to make another fighting game in the same vein. *Ehrgeiz* was brought to arcades in Japan and the U.S. Apparently it was a success on both sides of the Pacific, since Square brought it home for PlayStation in both territories.

Naturally, the game shares more than a few similarities to *Tobal 2*, first and foremost in the control scheme. This isn't your traditional fighter, as Dream Factory utilizes as much of the third dimension as possible. Rather than mashing jump and crouch to the up and down locations on the directional pad, you move around the arena in all of the controller's eight directions. You're still given the ability to jump by double-tapping the controller in the upward direction. But thanks to the additional buttons on the PlayStation controller, the shoulder buttons have been mapped with that same ability, something familiar



Sure, it has its faults, but with its high-res graphics and fast engine, this remains one of the best looking 3D games to hit PlayStation yet

to anyone who's played *Tobal*.

The game also features a very crisp and clean 3D engine that, like the *Tobal* series, uses PlayStation's rarely seen high-resolution mode. We're happy to report that *Ehrgeiz* improves both on the speed and graphic quality of its predecessors.

To lure newcomers, Square has thrown in three characters from *Final Fantasy VII*: Cloud, Tifa, and Sephiroth. This lends a familiar feel to a game that has a new style — for where *Ehrgeiz* departs from the *Tobal* series is in its maniacal pace. Unfortunately, in single-player modes you can exploit this

kineticism by playing up-close and personal with the computer AI until you've learned the one-button-tap combo that works across the board. Thankfully, two-player mode isn't as forgiving, and you'll find yourself utilizing every inch of the multi-tiered levels in the game. Like the levels in *Virtua Fighter 3*, the stages feature multi-layer platforms, and to succeed you will have to learn the best ways to retreat into the extra tiers of the stages.

Interestingly, one of the most significant additions to *Ehrgeiz*, an extensive quest mode, was one of the very things that prevented *Tobal 2* from being brought to the U.S. Dream Factory has built a very RPG-like quest game using the game's fighting and 3D engine. Although it may not have the same depth as *Final Fantasy* or *Xenogears*, this ensures plenty of gameplay time.

Technologically speaking, *Ehrgeiz* is an impressive fighter, but it does have balance problems, especially the one-button gameplay of the one-player game. Still, it's good to see developers straying from the accepted formula with new fighting designs that truly work

In addition to the game's original characters, Square has injected a little star power to *Ehrgeiz* by adding *Final Fantasy VII* characters Cloud, Tifa, and Sephiroth into the mix

RATING



**A game that relied on style over substance returns with even more style and (arguably) less substance**

## LUNAR: SILVER STAR STORY COMPLETE



Publisher: **Working Designs**  
Developer: **Working Designs/Game Arts**



The game now includes over 40 minutes of animation, most of which is quite good



Yes, it looks a lot like a lot of other RPGs, and there's really nothing new here — but, that doesn't mean there isn't still a lot to like

**F**ive years ago, Sega's ailing CD system had one bona-fide classic, *Lunar: The Silver Star*. It wasn't so much what it was — an RPG with standard RPG mechanics — but how it was done. Eschewing the often dry, formal translations that were the norm at the time, the team at Working Designs instead played fast and loose with what the characters had originally "said," re-writing dialogue in American slang with Western pop-culture references. It was, in short, an irreverent hoot, and no one had seen anything quite like it before.

So here we are, in 1999, and *Lunar* has come back. This is more a remake than a re-release — the graphics have been redone to take advantage of PlayStation's greater resolution and expanded color palette, some of the characters have been re-designed, and fully animated scenes have been added (including a musical number or two). The story itself has been revised here and there, and the game as a whole seems larger.

The voice acting is a notch or two above average for a game, at least up to general anime standards (you can still expect a couple of clunky voices in with all the other good ones). This helps the humor,



Although based on the original and depicting the same world, the game's graphics are completely new, with a lot more detail

with also been revised, riffing on up-to-date material like *Austin Powers*, and even other RPGs (one minor character, Kyle's manservant, speaks in exactly the kind of bizarre, mangled English that used to be all you could expect from imported RPGs; it takes guts to have faith that the audience will get the joke).

The story is still a sprawling one, with a huge cast of characters. The hero, Alex, and his silver-voiced romantic interest, Luna, become entangled in a struggle between good and evil when one of the land's ancient "Four Heroes" turns to the dark side and becomes the Magic Emperor, bent on enslaving the world. Naturally, it turns out that Alex and Luna each have a heritage that neither is aware of, and which they will have to live up to if the world is to be saved.

Of course, this is a standard RPG backstory, and much of the rest of the game is standard RPG fare also. The changes freshen up the experience, but still leave it firmly grounded in yesterday's graphics and gameplay. One's reaction to the game seems to depend mostly on one's familiarity

with the original version. Longtime RPG fans are tickled to death, while more recent RPG devotees weaned on the likes of *Final Fantasy VII* and other 3D-and-special-effect-filled extravaganzas scratch their heads wondering what all the fuss is for.

See, playing an upgraded *Lunar* now is a bit like getting to watch a digitally enhanced *Thundercats* with *Dolby Surround*: you're either going to think that's really cool, or you won't. If you do, then the entire package (four disks: two for the game itself, plus a separate music CD, and "making of" movies) will satisfy the most avid completists.

If you don't get it, well, too bad.

RATING

★★★★☆



One problem: It's silly, but so are a lot of games these days

## 3XTREME

Platform: **PlayStation**  
 Publisher: **SBS Studios**  
 Developer: **SBS Studios**

It must be a kick to see what goes on behind closed doors at 989 Studios—we're curious how the company can actually justify some of the decisions made on games it releases. How can 989 Studios say that enough design work went into 3Xtreme to rationalize the game being different than the previous two incarnations of the Xtreme license?

There's no way to dance around the fact: 3Xtreme is still just Road Rash on a skateboard, inline skates, or a BMX bike, and it's still not as good as Road Rash, either. The graphics have improved, but not by much— the characters have been given a complete 3D makeover, but they still move like sprites. Yep, we miss the port, too.

The game is still a dreadfully dull race down street hills where you carefully navigate through tiny gates for points. Every now and then an obstacle or two will pop up that will give you the opportunity to jump for more points, or pull off a basic jump or two for even more points. Maybe we've seen too many Mountain Dew commercials, but this doesn't feel very extreme to us.

Let's be brutally honest. This game is yet another formula "don't do much for the sequel, because they're gonna buy it anyway" production. While 989 obviously cares about some titles (GameDay, and possibly MLB), it clearly doesn't care at all about the others, judging from the way it churns out hideous gameplay-free, cash-in sequels like this. Twisted Metal, Cool Boarders, and now Xtreme. Stop the madness.

## RATING

★☆☆☆☆



3Xtreme: yet another reason to avoid the Xtreme series

## MLB 2000

Platform: **PlayStation**  
 Publisher: **SBS Studios**  
 Developer: **SBS Studios**



989's MLB 2000 still doesn't quite have what it takes to play in the big leagues

MLB 2000 from 989 Studios demands an almost schizophrenic response. There are things that make you want to love the game, then you notice something really annoying. There's more good than bad, but not much more.

The menus aren't exactly logically laid out—you choose whether you want a DH before you even choose the team, for example—but they

include most of the options that are necessary for a baseball game nowadays, including a season option and a pretty decent home-run challenge. And there are some quirks, like not being able to see the results of games other teams are playing during the season, just the overall standings.

The home-run derby is fun, but it really showcases a couple of other problems with the game. First, the commentary is really lame. You'd think that after having paid the money to feature Vin Scully and Dave Campbell, 989 Studios would have used them to the hilt. Unfortunately, the play-by-play consists of a handful of stock phrases, and the color commentary is likely to drive you up the wall.

Watching the game will make you question how the AI is handling the players. Watching Ken Griffey Jr. hit home run after home run to the opposite field makes you wonder if the programmers know he pulls most of

his shots. Even stranger, the AI thinks the Arizona Diamondbacks have a better shot to win the Series this year than the Yankees—at least, that's what happened for us with several simulated seasons.

Still, the controls give pretty smooth gameplay, and they're mostly intuitive. Players should get the hang of the controls fairly easily, and the game does play well, arguably as well as any other PlayStation baseball game. The graphics, on the other hand, have a static feel to them, as if there aren't enough keyframes in the players' motion.

MLB 2000 swings for the fences, but falls short: it doesn't do anything truly innovative, and it needed to in order to make up for some of the more annoying features of the game. It's still a fun game, but not the leader of the pack.

## RATING

★★★★☆

## TRIPLE PLAY 2000

Platform: **PlayStation**  
 Publisher: **EA Sports**  
 Developer: **EA Canada**

EA Sports comes up with a winner in its latest Triple Play for PlayStation. While the game doesn't break new ground, it includes everything you've come to expect from a baseball title, and does them all well.

As with most EA Sports games, the menu screens are logically laid out, with a wealth of options, if a bit slow. Once on the field, you'll immediately notice what a good job the developers have done rendering the ball parks; they've done an even better job with the players. The movement is realistic, smooth, and occasionally entertaining, although there are some strange quirks— it's OK for a pitcher to get excited over a big out once in a while, but it happens almost every other time.

The gameplay itself is smooth and intuitive. It doesn't take long to become reasonably proficient, but there are enough complexities that mastering the game will probably

take some time. One feature that works very well is the hitting. Triple Play 2000 gives players some control over when they hit the ball, as opposed to the swing-and-pray tactics of many other games.

Knowing that you're going to have a reasonable shot at hitting a fly ball toward the left certainly helps when planning strategy. Gameplay is also helped immeasurably by the intelligently switching camera angles while players have the ability to choose angles for hitting or fielding, when the action starts, the game will switch to an appropriate view, and it does it smoothly.

Perhaps the best feature, however, is the commentary. The team of Jim Hughson and Buck Martinez do an outstanding job— their comments are accurate and to the point. Also, they have stoned about most of the players and events during the '98 season and the different ball parks. All in all, a great



And the pick of this season's PlayStation baseball lineup goes to Triple Play 2000

job of making the game sound like the big leagues.

Overall, there's nothing particularly new in Triple Play 2000, but EA Sports has still presented us with a complete game that's a lot of fun to play and watch. If you're thinking of picking up a baseball game for PlayStation, this is the best choice.

## RATING

★★★★☆



## BUST A MOVE 2

Platform: **PlayStation**  
 Publishers: **Elek**  
 Developer: **Elek**

In the gaming world, it isn't uncommon to see good ideas run into the ground by uninspired sequels. Unfortunately, *Bust A Move 2* is the beginning of such a fall, failing even to match the success of its predecessor. Part of the problem comes from the fact that the game's concept is no longer new. When the first *Bust A Move* came out (*Bust A Groove* in the US) it was the only game of its type and featured technology that was more than adequate. Now, rhythm games are in vogue, and while there are still only a handful of dancing games, this one doesn't add much to the genre.

Which doesn't mean the game isn't fun, because it is. Gameplay has been enhanced slightly to include a new "mix" mode that uses four buttons instead of two. You must now also key in the patterns on the D-Pad to the rhythm of the song to dance correctly. There are also new characters like Bi-O the Zomba, and the returning characters are all decked out in new and different costumes.

Even with all of these extras, something is certainly missing. The music isn't quite as good as last time, the choreography is certainly less fun to watch, and on the whole, things seem fairly uninspired. The new backgrounds don't add a lot to the



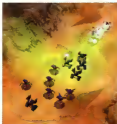
The original was a terrific game, but *Bust A Move 2* just runs in the same groove.

game, and the redesigned characters are simply different, not better. Honestly, the whole game just feels like a reread of a past hit with developers who didn't try to do anything other than milk the success of the last title. The game is definitely fun for a while, but it's really not the evolution of the series we'd hoped for.

RATING ★★☆☆☆

## MACHINES

Platform: **PC**  
 Publisher: **Acclaim**  
 Developer: **Cheryld**



Yet another entry in the realtime strategy sweepstakes, *Machines* more than holds its own, but that's about it.

Here's another entry in the crowded RTS field, this time with warring machines and no human element. Sound different? It's supposed to. And in a way, it is.

*Machines* is a 3D war sim of tactical and strategic management. You get both overhead and ground-level camera views with zoom-in and zoom-out capabilities. Terrain includes deserts, mountains, space stations, and cratered moons, with night and day lighting, fogging, sand, snow, and dust storms.

The switch is that you're dealing with machine life. The storyline is that humans launched a number of seed machines to four planets with orders to make them habitable.

## CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER

Platform: **PC**  
 Publishers: **Activision**  
 Developer: **Activision**

For Activision to set out to improve on the works of Sid Meier, Bruce Shelley, and Brian Reynolds takes some serious stones — on the order of WizardWorks releasing *Zelda 65: The Next Day*. Not only are *Civ I* & *II* as close to perfect as games get, but each possesses subtle design and brilliant game balance that remain unparalleled.

Unfortunately for Activision, that's still the case. Activision's game might best be described as the struggle between the adages "The bigger the Better" and "If it Ain't Broke, Don't Fix It." *Call to Power* has taken everything we know about the *Civilization* series and expanded it, but in all the wrong ways. The user interface, while offering

more options, is practically Byzantine in design — everything is located at the end of a maze of clicks, buttons, windows, and bars. Rather than a management mode that is city-centric, *Call to Power* is managed on a civilization-wide basis by manipulating overall happiness, production, food, gold, and science from a single screen. An excellent idea, marred by problems like a build queue that has to be set up separately for every new city and has no means of inserting a new unit into an existing queue to replace a unit that's technologically obsolete, for example) without erasing the entire queue and starting over.

There are many new units, some of which are interesting, but which also include an annoying class called "stealth units," such as lawyers, slavers, and televangelists, which are completely invisible as they sneak up on your cities and shut down production for a turn, or steal a population unit, or make your city give an opposing empire money every turn in perpetuity.

*Call to Power* is not without its good points, but in the end it's difficult to enjoy. Gamers hungry for a worthy sequel to *Civ II* will find it in Sid Meier's *Alpha Centauri*.



*Civilization: Call to Power* does nothing, but tarnish the *Civilization* name.

RATING ★★☆☆☆

Unfortunately, mankind goes down in global flames in the interim. The machines, taking orders from Earth, revert to default: software and continue to colonize space and replicate. Eventually they become self-aware, like the humans who created them. And that, of course, means they go to war.

Each of the four Earth-based mechanical life forms has its own control center, and none is eager to cede power. So the battle to survive begins in campaign mode, you'll travel across the universe in search of enemy home worlds in an attempt to dominate them.

You can play in single or multiplayer mode. Frontal attack is

paramount, but the design team drew ideas and strategy from the teachings of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, so sneak attacks and subterfuge are also important. Your machines can hide, penetrate enemy buildings, use sabotage, and carry out spy operations just like humans. So be careful. If you ignore cover capabilities, your enemies will use them against you, and you'll go down in rusty humiliation.

At the end of the day, *Machines* doesn't really add anything to the RTS genre, but it's a well-crafted, solid game that's original enough to keep your attention for as long as it takes to beat the game.

RATING ★★☆☆☆

## RECDIL

Platform: **PC**  
 Publisher: **Electronic Arts**  
 Developer: **Zipper Interactive**



EA's *Recdil* is fast paced and looks good — for an action title, you could do a lot worse

Montoning that *Recdil* is a "tank simulation" to action aficionados would be an injustice to both the game and audience. Until recently, tank games received an infamous reputation for being slow and unwieldy — capital crimes in an action title. So yes, it's a tank game, but it sure doesn't feel like one.

Opting for the modern trend of merging simulations and accelerator-

intensive action, *Recdil* shares visible characteristics with its modern cousin, *Wargasm*. While Digital Image Design's oddly titled actioner came up short in any number of ways, Zipper has managed to include things in *Recdil* that *Wargasm* lacked. To name a few, fully remappable keys, mouse support, and either variable or sustained throttle options.

Realism largely takes a back seat; your BFT (take a guess what the acronym stands for) is more akin to a Volkswagen Rabbit than any juggernaut of war. On the flip side, this rightly complements the game's screaming pace, more so than most other arcade tank efforts. Amongst all the frenzy, most shooter fans will quickly need to discover new maneuvering strategies — strafing simply isn't possible.

*Recdil* loses no points for its choice of arsenal, either, napalm, guided missiles, and "practical"

nukes are among the many cool ordnance available. Turret control is 360-degrees and independent of chassis direction. This dual freedom of control will initially disorient even veterans of first-person shooters, but with practice, the fresh gameplay is reward enough, for a while.

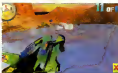
Unfortunately, the game ships with only six campaigns. Later episodes will prescribe heavy dosages of quick-saves, but brace yourself for an abrupt end to the half-baked conspiratorial plot. Unless you can make the most out of replay value and multiplayer at Westwood Online, it's hard to recommend this fireworks show at full ticket price.

*Recdil*'s selling points are of the fast and fiery variety, but due to its brevity, this blockbuster may ultimately be little more than a weekend diversion, which prevents us from giving it a higher score.

RATING ★★★☆☆

## HYDRO THUNDER

Platform: **Arcade**  
 Publisher: **Midway**  
 Developer: **Midway**



More than just "San Francisco Rush on the water," *Hydro Thunder* takes boat racing to the extreme

Boat-racing games have never been very popular, perhaps because it's hard to tune the control just right and keep the excitement as high as in a land-based game. Now,

with *Hydro Thunder*, Midway has finally created the boat-racing game that will bring this sub-genre to the forefront.

Describing the game as "San Francisco Rush on the water" is a great start, but it fails to give the game credit where it's due. While the underlying structures may be the same, *Hydro Thunder* stands out by doing so much more than its land-based counterpart. First and foremost, since you now race high-speed boats, the physics are different than what most players are used to. You may find that while some of the skills they've learned in driving games may come in handy, it takes lots of practice to become adept at controlling watercraft. As you become proficient, you can steer to find hidden shortcuts along the tracks or to pick up turbos, allowing you to go even faster for short periods of time. Quite simply, there's a lot of meat to this game and, once hooked, you'll find yourself spending quite a bit of time mastering all of the intricacies of the gameplay.

Depth is further added by the large variety of boats (9) and tracks (11)

to choose from. The tracks range from the rather passive Greek Isles to the turbulent Nile Adventure (complete with strange beasts and monsters).

Each world is finely detailed and reflects some of the best level design we've seen in a racer. Especially nice are the little touches, like the tour boat you pass that announces, "Hydro Thunder's environments are made up of thousands of triangle polygons" to which the tourists all "ooooo!" and "ahhhh!" appreciatively.

Unfortunately the game's single-player mode pales compared to the multiplayer fun that can be had. It's just the perfect game for laying down the smack before a good grudge match, and relations among editors at **Next Generation** have declined precipitously since the game arrived (although, we'd like to note, **Next Generation**'s editors are undefeated when facing editors from other Imagine publications; if you've been longing for the next exciting racing game after *Rush: The Rock*, it's here.

RATING ★★★★★

## WARZONE 2100

Platform: **PC**  
 Publisher: **Eidos**  
 Developer: **Pumpkin Studios**

Every new real-time strategy game claims to be unique, with all kinds of fresh and vital innovations. Usually it's a case of hype over matter, but in the case of *Warzone 2100*, there's some truth to the bragging.

Yes, it's another RTS game, strongly resembling pacesetters like *Command & Conquer*. It has familiar Earth terrain, units, and interface. But it's set in a true 3D world, with rotating and zoomable cameras, night and day, deserts, mountains, devastated urban sites, snow, mist, explosions, and all the smoking goodies that make a 3D card worth the money.

The story isn't bad. Earth is having a bad day. A satellite defense system malfunctioned, obliterating cities, inflicting nuclear winter, and destroying much of the world's population. The few survivors banded together in small scavenger hordes. Now it's time to eliminate hostile bands and build a new world.

Each campaign features a large map (there are three of them — Arizona desert, cluttered urban ruins, and the Rockies), plus sub-maps for quick mission play. Your military base lasts throughout each campaign, allowing you to save units, technical improvements, and structures from mission to mission.

In the midst of pell-mell action, you must find and research up to 400 pre-disaster artifacts, which provide technology for new weapons and vehicles. There are also some nice management options, enabling close control without added fuss and bother.

It all adds up to a surprisingly mature RTS game that will keep you coming back.

RATING ★★★★★



*Warzone 2100* offers enough new twists to make it a surprise hit, so give it a shot

## STAR WARS EPISODE I: RACER

Platform: **Nintendo 64**  
 Publisher: **LucasArts**  
 Developer: **LucasArts**

With a new Star Wars movie comes a new Star Wars game. The title may be awkward — it's *Star Wars Episode I: Racer* — but the game itself is a fast-paced racing title based on the pod-racing scene featured in *The Phantom Menace*.

You can choose from among eight drivers and their vehicles, including a young Anakin Skywalker. Each vehicle has unique values for things like traction, turning, acceleration, and top speed. Progressing through the courses accumulates money, which can be used to buy upgrades for the vehicle's handling characteristics, adding to the game's playability. The racers are essentially two massive engines tethered to a cockpit, each with its own damage meter. It's possible to wreck the entire pod, or you can simply blow out one motor so the player has to finish the race with one engine.

As the player beats the courses, more vehicles and tracks can be opened up for a total of 25 vehicles and 23 tracks. The tracks can also be mirrored for 46 possible tracks to race on. Players can choose to race in free-play mode, accessing any driver and any track, or in tournament mode, which is a three-tiered competition, with each tier more difficult than the last.

Racer runs in high-resolution



**Star Wars Episode I: Racer is enjoyable (despite the clunky title) but relies too heavily on the strength of its license**

mode with the memory expansion installed. In hi-res mode, the graphics are very sharp and the horizon is a respectable distance away. Draw-in is also handled intelligently, with generic graphics far off in the distance and detail being drawn as the racer approaches. However, without the memory pak, Racer's graphics are blurry and the game lags along at a mediocre frame rate.

In fact, given that there are a lot of racing games for Nintendo 64, Racer more or less sits squarely in the middle of the pack. Yes, it's fast, it's largely customizable, features a lot of options, and it's fun, but it's tough to shake the feeling that if it weren't for the Star Wars license, it wouldn't otherwise stand out.

RATING

★★★★☆

## ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2000

Platform: **Nintendo 64**  
 Publisher: **Acclaim**  
 Developer: **Iguana**

Last year Acclaim released the Iguana-developed *All-Star Baseball '99* for Nintendo 64 and blew any competition out of the water. The game, running on Acclaim's Quagmire Sports engine, featured some of the most impressive, fluid visuals ever seen for the console and tight gameplay mechanics to boot. But it was far from perfect. Serious AI issues and overlooked bugs kept it from attaining a perfect score.

For *ASB 2000*, Iguana took last year's game engine and implemented a number of enhancements in the way of new custom-tweaked AI, bug fixes, a brilliant expanded batting/peaching system, a boosted sense of speed, and more options than ever before.

The pitching/batting system for *ASB '99* was one of the most intuitive **NG** had seen at the time. This year's sequel improves upon it greatly with



**All-Star Baseball 2000 is even better than ASB '99, but a few nagging problems remain**

the addition of a 3D-directional hitting square. Whereas the original game required players to line up a circle (representing the batter's swing) with oncoming pitches in order to hit the ball, *ASB 2000* goes one step further. Now, gamers can angle a 3D batter's square in any direction — be it up, down, left, or right — and send the ball soaring in the desired direction. This spectacular enhancement absolutely makes the game and is bound to be copied by every future baseball title.

The visual differences between last year's incarnation of the *ASB* franchise and *ASB 2000* are minimal. However, to its credit, Iguana has made a number of graphic tweaks and introduced a significant number of new animation routines for its like-like player models. The only disappointment is the game's sound, which is bland and uninspired and doesn't even compare to last year's *Ken Griffey Baseball* for Nintendo 64.

Sadly, as **NG** was about to give *ASB 2000* a perfect rating, we stumbled upon a handful of unfixed gameplay oversights and bugs. Two examples include still-shoddy AI glitches and the fact that the time of day never changes during season play, despite Iguana's option for it. This is still Nintendo 64's best baseball game, but with a little more work, it could have been a flawless sequel.

RATING

★★★★☆

## MONACO GRAND PRIX: RACING SIMULATION 2

Platform: **Nintendo 64**  
 Publisher: **Ubi Soft**  
 Developer: **Ubi Soft**



**One of the many nice touches in Monaco Grand Prix: If a car goes off the track into the dirt, it will kick up a dust cloud behind it**

Ubi Soft, the company behind one of the worst F1 simulations on N64, *F1 Pole Position*, is now also behind one of the best, *Monaco Grand Prix: Racing Simulation 2*.

*F1 Pole Position* was a truly dreadful racing sim with poor framerate, graphics, and gameplay. Rather than continue a losing series, Ubi Soft chose to take its outstanding PC F1 racing simulation to N64, where it easily competes for the top seat in N64 racing titles. Graphically, *Monaco Grand Prix* looks fabulous, with well-detailed vehicles and tracks, car damage, weather effects, tire effects, and a high framerate.

As a simulation, *Monaco GP* is outstanding. The player has complete control over variables like wing angle, suspension rigging gear box, body size, tires, steering, and brakes. An easy-to-understand interface takes a lot of the guesswork out of customizing your racer, and once a car is built, it can be saved for later use. In addition to car customization, the player can choose to race for different teams with different drivers who have unique stats that affect their proficiency in the cockpit.

Game physics are also good, providing a very realistic feel. At the end of the race, the car setup has a

huge impact on who wins and what a player's final time is. The arcade option is also good. In arcade mode, the physics of F1 racing, which are exacting, are dumbed down, making it much easier for novice racers to begin to enjoy the sport.

Racing sims, especially F1 racing sims, are usually either very bad or very good. Thankfully, *Monaco Grand Prix: Racing Simulation 2* is very good. With 16 tracks, 22 cars onscreen at the same time, two-player split-screen racing, excellent graphics, detailed physics, and great gameplay, it's a hard title to stop playing.

RATING

★★★★☆

Pioneer

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# ADVANCED STRATEGIES

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## R4: RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: NAMCO

### REAL RACING ROOTS REVEALED

The next big title in the *Ridge Racer* series has finally hit the United States and with it comes an unprecedented number of cars to unlock and race. Starting out in the game, you'll find that all 321 cars (some of them variations of each other) aren't immediately available; you'll have to do a lot of racing in order to access them all.

### UNLOCKING EVERY CAR

In order to access every car in *R4*, you're going to have to work for it. And working means that you'll be racing through every mode and track countless times on different difficulty levels and with every car. For racing fans, this presents a formidable challenge, but it's not always clear which car you'll earn for accomplishing different tasks.

Keep in mind that each of the four different car manufacturers (Assoluto, Uzard, Terra2, and Age Solo) offers 20 different vehicles apiece. If you do the math, by multiplying the 20 different cars by the four different manufacturers, you still only come up with 80 cars. So, how do you get all 321? That's the tricky part.

The Grand Prix mode gives you a chance to earn 19 cars from each manufacturer by racing through each of the three different stages. Once you complete a stage, you'll be awarded with a different car depending on your placing in the race. If your ending position leaves a lot to be desired, then you'll most likely be awarded with the same car, but with improved top speed and handling, if you manage to place respectably in the race, you'll receive a brand-new car in your garage.

From there on out, it's basically rinse-and-repeat through the three different stages for every single car in your inventory and from each manufacturer. But this still leaves four cars, one from each manufacturer, still locked in the game that you haven't accessed just yet. How do you get them? Read about extra trial mode to find out.

### DRIFT VS. GRIP CORNERING

The differences between a drift car and a grip car are immense and greatly figure into how you handle corners throughout *R4*. And in order to access all 321 cars, you'll also need to be proficient at winning with both types of vehicles.

To master handling all the cars in the game, you must consider every aspect of each type of vehicle and how they take corners. Thus braking

zones and acceleration points must be taken into account and mastered in order to succeed. Drift cars have a tendency to spin out in a tight turn since their back ends have a looser hold on the road, while grip cars keep you stuck to the road no matter how much of angle you drive into. Below is a description of how to best handle the turns in either type of car.

#### DRIFT

Sliding is a big factor to take into account when it comes to cornering with a drift car. Not only



can you slide into and out of a tight turn, you'll also be able to use the drift of your car's back end to guide you at an angle through a turn just in time to accelerate out of the curve and onto the straightaway. But mastering this technique is what will separate the winners from the drivers who end up in second place.

Most *Ridge Racer* fans will already have their drift-car cornering already down to a science from playing other installations in the series, but it has been awhile. You'll need to polish the tail slide in order to power drift around tight turns, so when you begin your approach to a turn, steer the car toward the inside of the course. Take pressure off the acceleration and tap the brakes to begin sliding around the apex of the turn. Make sure to keep your car steered toward the inside of the turn. Immediately after you've cleared the tightest apex of the curve with the nose of your car still pointed toward the wall, hit the acceleration and gently steer your car out and onto the straightaway.

Keep in mind that you'll need to leave room between your car and the inner wall for the front end of your car, since the back end is what will be carrying you through most of the turn. Never oversteer once you've exited the curve. You'll want to let the velocity of the power slide carry you into a straight line, then justify your position slightly to avoid making contact with the outer wall.

#### GRIP

Grip cars will hug the road with all four wheels, which makes braking a necessity



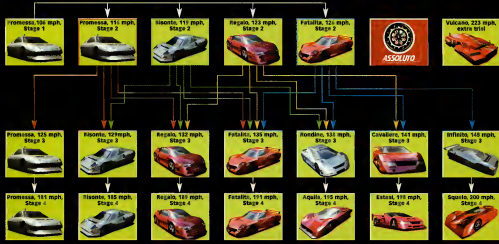
only outside of the turn. Grip cars also take the straighter line, in contrast to the power-sliding powers of the drift car. You'll want to take the closest path against the inner wall in order to avoid running into the external barrier, but at the same time you must take into account the exact zones where you'll need to let off the acceleration, then stop on it again.

Enter the turn from the outer wall and steer almost straight toward the inner wall to cut across the bulk of the corner. To do this, tap the brakes repeatedly at the section of the curve when the road begins to turn, then steer sharply into the turn, aiming for the outlet at an angle. The nose of your car should be facing the outer wall of the corner's outlet. When you clear the apex of the turn, wait until you can see the straightaway to hit the gas once again, then straighten out and resume the race.

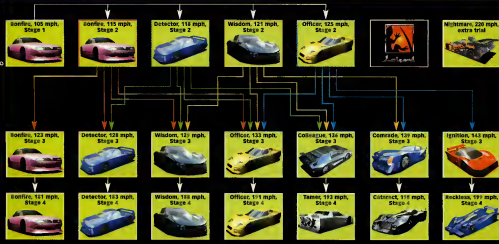
Grip cars can be a bit trickier since the steering is tighter and the room for allowance when taking a turn goes down drastically. Always use the full width of the road to give yourself time to straighten out your car's path when exiting a curve, and keep practicing in order to master the technique. It's tough — requiring quick judgment, good reflexes, and some practice to perfect — but it's far from impossible.

## CAR GALLERY

## THE DRIFT COLLECTIONS — ASSOLUTO



## THE DRIFT COLLECTIONS — LIZARD



## EXTRA TRIAL MODE

After completing the Grand Prix mode once, you'll have access to a mode pitting you against some of the wackier vehicles in the game. You can enter the extra trial mode by finding the option open at the bottom of the main menu. But bear in mind that you can only compete against the four extra cars with ones that you've earned from playing through the Grand Prix mode. This means that you'll be having to race through Grand Prix with cars from each manufacturer in order to successively unlock the extra cars.

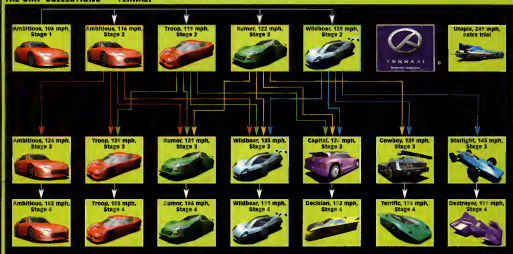


But they're more than worth the effort; you'll zip around the track in everything from a hovercraft to a European mini if you manage to win against them in extra trial mode. It'll take a lot of effort to win against these super-powered vehicles in the new mode. They're incredibly fast and accurate, so make sure to have your techniques down before attempting to win here.

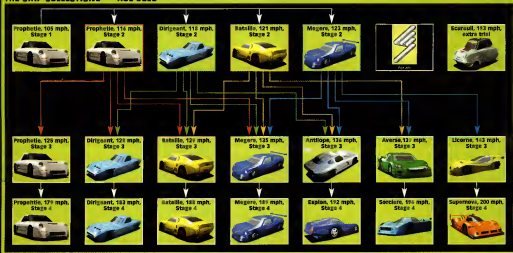
## WHAT ELSE?

Just like its predecessors, *R4* also packs in secrets for gamers to unlock. Here are some of

## THE GRIP COLLECTIONS — TERRAZI



## THE GRIP COLLECTIONS — AGE SOLO



the otherwise hidden things you can unlock while playing through the game.

## THE PAC-MAN CAR

Beyond the 320 cars available, there is one more car that can only be raced in time trial mode. Taking the shape of Namco's most famous character, the Pac-Man car is only



accessible once you've unlocked all other cars.

Handed like a drift car, the Pac-Man vehicle sports only three wheels and is accompanied by a new selectable music track called "Eat 'em Up." One listen and you'll recognize it as the remixed theme from the original Pac-Man series.

## THE HIDDEN DECALS

In edit mode, which allows you to customize the look of your car, you'll notice that you are also able to add special decals to the vehicle's body. While there are 20 decals available at the outset of the game, you will also get the chance to access four extra decals featuring the R4 girl,

Reiko Nagase, in different color schemes. These four extra decals must be earned before they can be used in edit mode.

In order to get all four, you'll need to beat Grand Prix mode perfectly and in first place with cars from each of the four different teams. For the blue Reiko decal, complete the game racing the D.R.T. For the orange-hued Reiko decal, you'll need to race on the Micro Mouse Mappy team. To access the green-tinted Reiko decal, P.R.C. is the team you'll need to join and complete Grand Prix mode with. And lastly, if you beat the game using R.T.S., you'll receive the red Reiko decal. Good luck.

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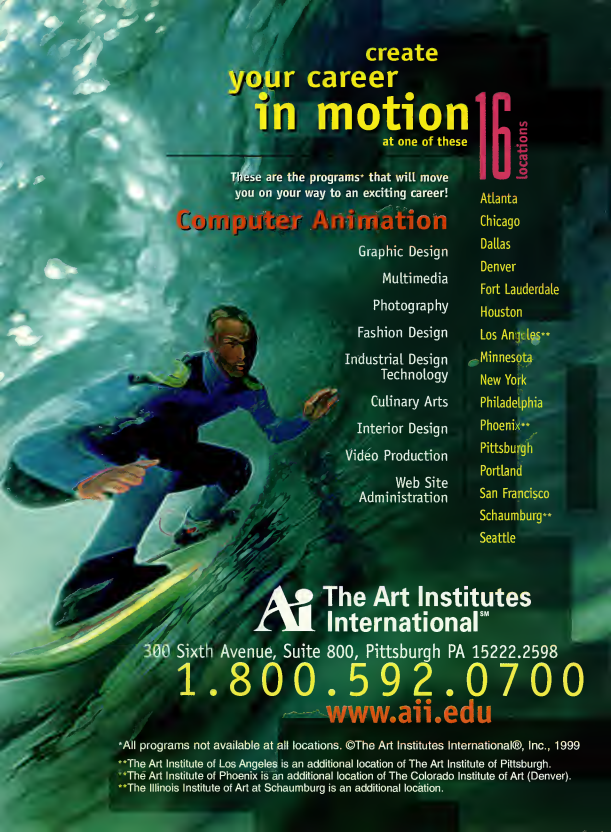
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# ENDING

Next Generation, a link to the past



**Retroview** by Steven Kent, author of a forthcoming book on the history of videogames

## ACCOLADE vs. SEGA

**W**herever you find money, you'll find lawyers, and the game industry is no exception. In fact, Nintendo Chairman Howard Lincoln and GameWorks Chairman Skip Paul are both lawyers by training, and much of the history of videogames was written in legalese by judges in court decisions: Atari had barely started manufacturing Pong when Magnavox's lawyers came calling, and the big cases have steadily continued to the battles today over software emulators.

Many of those cases — and future cases for years to come — hinge on a curious case that went to trial in 1991: Sega Enterprises Ltd. vs. Accolade Inc. When Sega released Genesis in 1989, Accolade founders Bob Whitehead and Alan Miller decided to convert some of their PC titles into cartridges for the new console without getting approval from, or paying a licensing fee to, Sega. Accolade's first Genesis game was a board game called *Ishido*. In 1990, Sega unveiled a new version of Genesis that featured a double security gate against unlicensed cartridges. The first protection was the Trademark Security System (TMSS), an externally developed security system that locked out unlicensed games. The only way around TMSS was a small code buried inside game programs. The first time Accolade heard about TMSS was at the 1991 Consumer Electronics Show, when a Sega representative performed a demonstration of the security

system using none other than an *Ishido* cartridge. By this time, Accolade was preparing to release five new games.

Caught in a vulnerable situation, Accolade engineers scrambled to discover what piece of code the licensed cartridges used to satisfy TMSS. They found their answer in a tiny segment of code contained in the "power-up" sequence of the game code that had no identifiable function. That file was added to the games *Star Control*, *HardBall*, *Turrican*, and *Mike Ditka Power Football* before Accolade released them on the market. Accolade's fifth game, *Orslaught*, did not have the TMSS file in the correct location and

in such a case, the TMSS initialization code then prompts a visual display for approximately three seconds which reads "PRODUCED BY OR UNDER LICENSE FROM SEGA ENTERPRISES LTD" (the "Sega Message").

Judge Stephen Reinhardt

On October 31, 1991, Sega Enterprises filed suit against Accolade, accusing the company of trademark infringement and unfair competition. One month later, Sega added copyright infringement to its charges. Accolade lodged a counterclaim, accusing Sega of false designation of origin and unfair competition.

## Accolade had inadvertently stumbled into a trap ... the only information in the file was the binary code version of the letters "SEGA"

would not run on the new Genesis consoles.

Accolade had inadvertently stumbled into a trap. Placing the file in their game code caused a blatant trademark violation. The only information in that file was the binary code version of the letters "S E G A."

*When a game cartridge is inserted, the microprocessor contained in the Genesis searches the program for four bytes of data consisting of the letters "S-E-G-A" (the "TMSS initialization code"). If Genesis II finds the TMSS initialization code in the right location, the game is rendered compatible and will operate on*

Among other things, the counterclaim stated that Sega injured Accolade's reputation by falsely attributing itself as the source of the unlicensed games.

The case was heard by Judge Barbara Caulfield, who seemed to side with Sega. In her decision, she pointed out that Accolade copied the S-E-G-A code that triggered the Sega logo and licensing message. Accolade's lawyers explained that there was no way of knowing that the TMSS code would bring up the trademark and licensing messages when the code was added to the games. Accolade engineers had simply recognized that this small file could be found in games that worked on the new

### QUESTION

To help differentiate the Odyssey 2 system from competing systems, this game was released as the first of the *Master Strategy* series and came with an extra game board as well as several of playing tokens.

### WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO?

#### Combat II

Although it was solated in Atari catalogs, this game was never released. It featured new types of terrain, bases that had to be defended, and the ability to fire heat-seeking missiles at your enemy.



console and was not present on games that were screened out. In her decision, Judge Caulfield dismissed this argument.

Accolade boldly inserted SEL's code into its games before SEL released the [new] Genesis into the marketplace, and thus without

ruled in favor of Sega and enjoined Accolade from "disassembling, translating, converting, or adapting" the codes in Sega's games. She also ordered Accolade to stop manufacturing, distributing, and developing Genesis-compatible products. The decision meant that Accolade, a relatively

was quickly repealed, the rest of Caulfield's injunction remained in effect for several months.

*This was just terrible. Just to fight the injunction, we had to pay at least a half million dollars in legal fees, and the commercial damage associated with this injunction ultimately proved to be somewhere around \$15 to \$25 million to our company.*

Alan Miller

## The move to recall all of Accolade's Genesis cartridges was a death sentence for a company of Accolade's small size

fully realizing the consequences. Accolade took that risk, and cannot now shift the responsibility to SEL and SOA (Saga of America).

Judge Barbara Caulfield

On April 3, 1992, Judge Caulfield

small company was stuck with thousands of worthless cartridges. Six days later, at Sega's request, Judge Caulfield added an order that Accolade recall all Genesis-compatible games within ten business days. Though the recall

Though Judge Caulfield could not let this enter into her decision, the move to recall Accolade's Genesis cartridges was a death sentence for a company of that small size.

**NEXT MONTH:** How Accolade survived.

## Looking Back at Those Who Looked Forward

**I**n 1982, Trip Hawkins and nine others started a revolution called Electronic Arts. "We see farther," said the ads that started running in 1983, which pictured each of the new "software artists"

that were making games for the new company. For the first time in history, the ads weren't just about the games themselves but focused on the minds behind these titles

EA's image at the time was not

the development house we know today; it was, instead, a publisher of independent software projects from young developers who all worked out-of-house. "The thinking was that people didn't want to work in an office and didn't want a dress code and didn't want to work long hours," says co-founder Bing Gordon about the reasons for the new business model. For five years, EA didn't publish a single internally developed title yet was still responsible for releasing such classics as *M.U.L.E.*, *Pinball Construction Set*, and *Starfox* (its first breakout hit).

Unfortunately, the model didn't work so well when it became apparent that the market wanted sequels to these games. The same creators that built the company up weren't very hot on the idea of having to create sequels instead of entirely new projects or even taking a sabbatical with their royalties. It was at this point that EA started some internal development so that the company could properly support this demand. Because of this, EA slowly evolved into the mega-developer/publisher it is today. But what happened to "software art"?

NE

## ANSWER

Quest For The Rings



Each developer also had a title to go with his name. Some of these games are still recognized as classics, but others have faded into obscurity.

**Pinball Construction Set** allowed wannabe game-makers to create and play their own customized tables.



**Archie** combined the strategy of chess with action-oriented battles between mythical monsters and heroes.



**Axix Assassin** was essentially a nice-looking Tempest-style shooter.



**Hand Hat Meek** took the ideas behind Donkey Kong and put them in a construction-yard setting.



**M.U.L.E.** placed four players on a new world and made them compete for resources and marketplace while terraforming.



**Murder on the Zindameer** was one of the few graphic adventures to come out of EA—then or now.



**Worms?** is the strongest game in the launch line and was a unique strategy experience.



The original lineup of developers from EA's landmark "We see farther" ad campaign. Counterclockwise from top right: Bill Budge (Pinball Construction Set), Anna Westfall (Archie), Jon Freeman (Murder on the Zindameer), Dan Bunten (M.U.L.E.), Matt Alexander and Mike Abbot (Hand Hat Meek), John Field (Axix Assassin), and David Maynard (Worms?)

## Letters

Write makes might

In **NG 51**, you said that you killed the editor that said *Diablo* was made by Westwood by driving nails into him with a hammer. Then in **NG 52**, you said you killed him by throwing acid in his face. So I want to know how did you really maliciously destroy him? And what is the fate of the editor who said you killed him twice?

**Denny J. Wasielewski**  
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Actually, it was bullets we drove into him with a hammer, since none of us own guns — a small point, but one worth pointing out, since while excruciatingly painful, it did not, in fact, prove fatal. In any case, the usual letters editor was on hiatus for **NG 52**, and the editor who took over for that issue hadn't realized the error had already been corrected. In response to this error, the temp letters editor was going to be lowered slowly into boiling oil, but in view of our new policy of non-violence, we grounded him instead and suspended his TV-watching privileges for a week. We're sure he feels really bad.

I was wondering what you guys think of Dreamcast. I already have a preorder for it, but I

want to know if it will have good software after *Sonic* and *Virtua Fighter*. I am a big fan of action/adventure games and RPGs, but will Dreamcast have these? *Clmax* (landers) looks cool, but will it make it Stateside? Square is still with Sony so I have to buy a PlayStation 2 because of *Final Fantasy* and *Chrono Trigger*, but that's a while away. Can I survive a year with dwindling good PlayStation games and mediocre N64 games? Will you buy a Dreamcast when they first come out? And should I have a Dreamcast too?

**Carl Kloster**  
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At this point (and as you might have gathered from following our Dreamcast coverage and reading last issue's feature), it would appear that not only will Dreamcast have any number of worthwhile titles when it debuts in the U.S., including *Sonic* and *Virtua Fighter 3tb*, but also tasty morsels such as *Power Stone*, *Shenmue*, and *Soul Calibur*. Further, it will be at least a year before PlayStation 2 makes its debut, and there's no telling how long after that it will take developers to come to grips with the system well enough to design games that are notably



The guts of the PlayStation 2 development system — two orders of magnitude more powerful than the original



Titles like *Shenmue* make the Dreamcast a very appealing system to buy this holiday season. Why wait?

better than those found on Dreamcast. Plus, even at launch, Dreamcast is going to be relatively inexpensive for a brand-new console.

Our advice to the hardcore listener, let's be real. You know there are going to be games on both systems you're going to want, and you've got a whole year (maybe longer) to save up for a PlayStation 2, so in the meantime there's really no reason not to pick up the hottest existing hardware at a more-than-reasonable price — you know you want it anyway, so buy a Dreamcast and be happy. As for the less hardcore: well, if you have to, you can sit tight with your outdated, aging PlayStation or Nintendo 64 until the 2000 holiday

season (or later), then decide which system seems to have the most games you want to play, and buy that.

As much as I'd love to see a machine 10 billion times as powerful as PlayStation (frighteningly enough, I may someday), I believe you meant to say that PlayStation 2 is two orders of magnitude more powerful than its predecessor on page 09 of **NG 53** (and what's with the 0, anyway? It can't be to keep a consistent two digits, since the magazine has more than 100 pages).

**Brent Christopher Spiller**  
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After appealing to everything from rational number theory to high-order linear algebra, the editor in question had to grudgingly admit he was off in his estimation. No hot coals for him anymore. We're sure he feels really bad.

As for "0" before single-digit page numbers, that was implemented from the beginning so that every issue of **Next Generation** would be Y2K compliant. You don't want all 60 published issues to abruptly crash at midnight on December 31 this year, do you? It would make back issues worrisome.

**O**n page 15 of **NG 53**, it was stated that there are rumors of a PlayStation emulator for the Dreamcast. Wouldn't Sega have to first buy the rights from Sony before producing an emulator? How is Sony benefiting by allowing PlayStation games to be played on Sega's next system? Could this be a misprint?

**Carlos Bizyk**

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No, it's not a misprint. To reiterate: as long as an emulator is completely reverse-engineered and doesn't use any original code from the system it's emulating, legally speaking you don't need to license the technology, and there's very little a company like Sony can do to stop a company from writing one and releasing it to the public. The recent release of Virtual Game Station for Mac, and the (at press time) soon-to-be-released Beem for PC — and the fact they're still available despite the lawsuits that followed — bears this out.

And, once again, for the record, rumors of a PlayStation emulator for Dreamcast are exactly that: rumors. No one at Sega or Sony will comment either way.

**I**n **NG 53**, there was a letter arguing whether Genesis controllers had three or four



The voice acting in *Resident Evil* was the only aspect of the game that was universally panned. Too bad it started a trend.

buttons. In it, a reader said that Genesis shipped with two controllers. It didn't, and any real Sega fan (that was too cheap to buy a second controller) will remember playing two-player games with one of the players using a Master System controller. It worked fine as long as you didn't need the A button, and that was always used for unimportant stuff like magic anyway.

**Sturet**

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This has stirred up some odd *Altered Beast* memories among a number of staff members that they were probably better off not remembering. However, once the Thorazine had worn off, we agreed this was the case. Thanks for pointing this out (we think).

**O**nce, while talking about *Resident Evil*, I made a comment that the bad voice acting in the first game was a good thing, because it only added to the feel of the whole game, its B-movie hollowness. By no means did I intend for anyone to think this was good all by itself. For all the developers out there reading this: Stop it. You put hard work

into a game to try and make it good, then ruin it with garbage voice acting. There is no excuse for it any more (look at how great the acting was in *Metal Gear Solid*), and it means you don't care or think we're idiots. Find people who know how to speak English and actors that know how to act. Please stop it. No more.

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Hear, hear! However, in the developers' defense, it's worth noting that voice talent is incredibly expensive — sometimes even pricier than hiring "regular" actors. In fact, one industry source, marveling at how well produced the voiceovers were in *Metal Gear Solid*, speculated whether that investment alone meant that Konami could ever make a profit.

However, it's also debatable which is more at fault, the voice acting or the poorly written dialogue (the original *Resident Evil* with its infamous "master of unlocking" line being one of the more egregious examples). In either case, you're right that it's well past time developers spend more time and talent on such details.

NG

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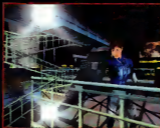
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